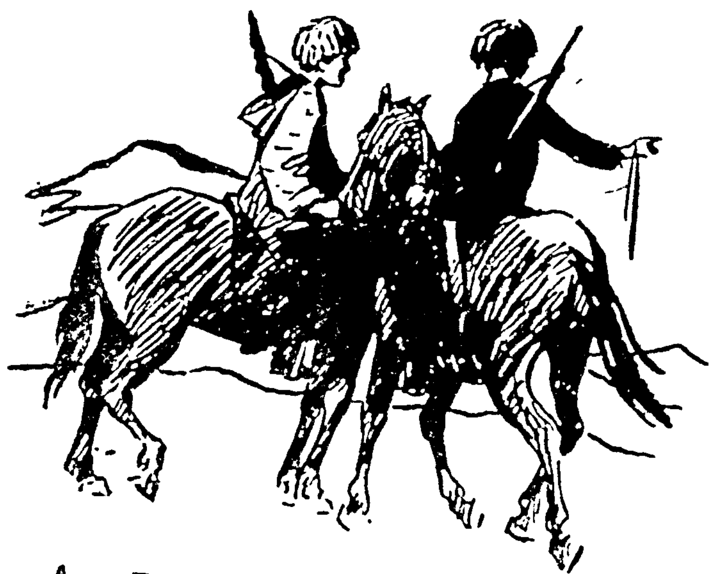

CLASSICS
OF
RUSSIAN
LITERATURE



Левъ Толстой



Л. ТОЛСТОЙ

КАЗАКИ

Кавказская повесть

ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ НА ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКАХ
Москва

L. TOLSTOI

The COSSACKS

A Story of the Caucasus



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE

Moscow

Edited by R. Daglish
Designed by D. Bisty

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN



CHAPTER I

Moscow has become quiet. Only very rarely does one hear the sound of wheels in the wintry streets. There are no longer any lights in the windows, and the street-lamps have gone out. From the church-towers comes the sound of bells which, borne over the sleeping city, reminds one of morning. The streets are empty. Now and then a sledge ploughs

its way through the snow and sand, and the driver, having reached the next street-corner, soon falls asleep, waiting for another fare. An old woman passes by on her way to the church, where a few irregularly placed wax candles are already burning with a red light which is reflected on the gilt mountings of the icons. Workmen are already getting up after the long winter night, and are going to their work.

But for the gentlefolk it is still evening.

Through chinks in the shutters of Chevalier's Restaurant, lights—unlawful at this hour—are still visible. At the entrance a carriage and a number of sledges are drawn up close to one another. There is also a three-horsed post-sledge. The yardporter, muffled up and pinched with cold, seems to be hiding behind the corner of the house.

"And what's the good of all this jawing?" thinks the waiter who, with a haggard look on his face, is sitting in the hall. "This is what always happens w' ·n I am on duty!"

From the adjoining brightly illuminated little room are heard the voices of three young men. On the table in the room are the remnants of supper and wine. One, a plain thin neatly dressed little man sits looking with kindly, tired eyes at the friend about to depart. Another, a tall man, playing with his watch-key, is lying on a sofa near the table on which stand the empty bottles. The third, in a new sheepskin coat, is pacing up and down. Every now and then he stops to crack an almond between his fingers, which are strong and thick, with carefully cleaned nails. He is constantly smiling at something, and his eyes and face are all aglow. He speaks with warmth, and gesticulates; but evidently he cannot find the words he wants, and those that come to his lips seem inadequate to express all that fills his heart.

"Now I can speak out," says the traveller. "I am not defending myself, but I want you, at least, to understand

me as I understand myself, and not to look at the matter from the common, vulgar point of view. You say I've treated her badly?" he continues, addressing the man who was looking at him with kindly eyes.

"Yes, you are to blame," says the latter, and his look seems to express still more kindness and weariness.

"I know why you say that," continues the traveller. "You think that to be loved is as great a happiness as to love, and should suffice for a whole lifetime, once you have attained it."

"Yes, my dear fellow, it is quite sufficient, more than sufficient," insists the plain little man, blinking.

"But why should not a man also love?" says the traveller thoughtfully, looking at his friend as if with pity. "Why shouldn't one love? Love doesn't come.... No, to be loved is a misfortune! It is a misfortune when it makes you feel guilty because you do not, and cannot, give back what you receive. Oh, my God!" And he waves his arm. "If only these things happened logically! But it's all topsy-turvy, and doesn't depend on us—it comes as it will. Why, it's as if I had stolen that love! You think so too. Don't deny it, you must think so! But would you believe that of all the stupid and detestable things I have found time to do in my life, this is one I do not and cannot repent of. Neither when it began, nor afterwards, did I consciously deceive myself or her. It seemed to me that I had at last fallen in love; but later on I discovered that I had been unconsciously deceiving myself—that it is impossible to love like that—and I could not go on, but she did go on. Is it my fault that I couldn't? What was I to do?"

"Well, anyway, it's all over now!" says his friend, lighting a cigar to keep awake. "Only you have never yet loved and do not know what love is!"

The man in the sheepskin was going to speak again, and put his hands to his head, but could not express what he wanted to say.

"Never loved! . . . Yes, quite true, I never have! But after all, I have within me a desire to love, and nothing could be stronger than that desire! But then, again, does such love exist? There always remains something incomplete. Ah well! What's the use of talking? I've made an awful mess of life! But anyhow, it's all over now; you are quite right. And I feel that I am beginning a new life."

"Which you will again make a mess of," said the man who lay on the sofa toying with his watch-key. But the traveller did not hear him.

"I am sad, and yet glad to go," he continued. "Why I am sad, I don't know."

And the traveller went on talking about himself, without noticing that this did not interest the others as much as it did him. A man is never such an egotist as in moments of spiritual exaltation. At such times it seems to him that there is nothing on earth more splendid and interesting than himself.

"Dmitry Andreyevich! The coachman won't wait any longer!" said a young serf, entering the room in a sheepskin coat with a scarf tied round his head. "The horses have been standing since eleven, and it's now four o'clock!"

Dmitry Andreyevich looked at his serf, Vanyusha. The scarf round Vanyusha's head, his felt boots, and sleepy face, seemed to be calling his master to a new life of labour, hardship, and activity.

"True enough! Good-bye!" he said, feeling for the unfastened hook on his coat.

In spite of advice to mollify the coachman by another tip, he put on his cap, and stood in the middle of the room. The friends kissed once, then again, and after a pause, a third time. The traveller approached the table and emptied a glass, then took the plain little man's hand and blushed.

"Ah well, I will speak out all the same.... I must and will be frank with you, because I am fond of you.... You do love her—I always thought so—don't you?"

"Yes," answered his friend, smiling still more gently.

"And perhaps...."

"If you please, sir, I have orders to put out the candles," said the sleepy waiter, who had been listening to the last part of the conversation and wondering why gentlefolk always talked about one and the same thing. "To whom shall I make out the bill? To you, sir?" he added, knowing whom to address, and turning to the tall man.

"To me," replied the tall man. "How much?"

"Twenty-six rubles."

The tall man considered for a moment, but said nothing, and put the bill in his pocket.

The other two continued their talk.

"Good-bye, you are a capital fellow!" said the little plain man with the mild eyes.

Tears filled the eyes of both. They stepped into the porch.

"Oh, by the by," said the traveller, turning with a blush to the tall man, "will you settle Chevalier's bill, and write and let me know?"

"All right, all right!" said the tall man, pulling on his gloves. "How I envy you!" he added quite unexpectedly when they were out in the porch.

The traveller got into his sledge, wrapped his sheepskin about him, and said: "Well, come then!" He even moved a little to make room in the sledge for the man who said he envied him; his voice trembled.

"Good-bye, Mitya! I hope that with God's help you..." said the tall one. But his only wish was that the other would go away quickly, and so he could not finish the sentence.

"Never loved! . . . Yes, quite true, I never have! But after all, I have within me a desire to love, and nothing could be stronger than that desire! But then, again, does such love exist? There always remains something incomplete. Ah well! What's the use of talking? I've made an awful mess of life! But anyhow, it's all over now; you are quite right. And I feel that I am beginning a new life."

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They were silent a moment. Then someone again said, "Good-bye," and a voice cried, "Ready," and the coachman touched up the horses.

"Come along, Yelizar!" one of the friends called out. The coachman and the sledge-drivers started up, clicking their tongues and pulling at the reins. The frozen wheels creaked over the snow.

"A fine fellow, that Olenin!" said one of the friends. "But what an idea, to go to the Caucasus—as a cadet, too! I wouldn't be hired to do it.... Are you dining at the club tomorrow?"

"Yes."

They separated.

The traveller felt warm, his furs seemed too hot. He sat in the bottom of the sledge and unfastened his coat, and the three shaggy post-horses dragged themselves out of one dark street into another, past houses he had never before seen. It seemed to Olenin that only travellers starting on a long journey went through those streets. All was dark and silent and dull around him, but his soul was full of memories, love, regrets, and a pleasant feeling of suppressed tears.

CHAPTER II

"I'm fond of them, very fond!... Splendid fellows!... Fine!" he kept repeating, and felt ready to cry. But why he wanted to cry; who were the splendid fellows; whom he was so fond of—was more than he quite knew. Now and then he looked round at some house and wondered why it was so curiously built; sometimes he began wondering why the driver and Vanyusha, who were so different from him, sat so near, and together with him were being jerked about and swayed by the tugs the side-horses gave at the frozen traces; and again he repeated: "Splendid ... very fond!" and once more he even said:

"Well done! . . . excellent!" and wondered what made him say it. "Dear me, am I drunk?" he asked himself. He had had a couple of bottles of wine, but it was not the wine alone that was having this effect on Olenin. He remembered all the words of friendship, heartily, bashfully, spontaneously (as he believed) addressed to him on his departure. He remembered the handshakes, the glances, the moments of silence, and the sound of a voice saying, "Good-bye, Mitya!" when he was already in the sledge. He remembered his own deliberate frankness. And all this had a touching significance for him. Not only friends and relatives, not only people who had been indifferent to him, but even those who did not like him, seemed to have agreed to become fonder of him, to forgive him, before his departure, as people do before confession or death.

"Perhaps I shall not return from the Caucasus," he thought. And he felt that he loved his friends, and someone else besides. He was sorry for himself. But it was not love for his friends that so stirred and uplifted his heart that he could not repress the meaningless words which seemed to rise of themselves to his lips; nor was it love for a woman (he had never yet been in love) that had brought on this mood. Love for himself, love full of hope, warm, young love for all that was good in his own soul (and at that moment it seemed to him that there was nothing but good in it) compelled him to weep and to mutter incoherent words.

Olenin was a youth who had never completed his university course, never served anywhere (having only a nominal post in some government office or other), who had squandered half his fortune, and had reached the age of twenty-four without having done anything or even chosen a career. He was what in Moscow society is termed *un jeune homme.*

At the age of eighteen he had been free—as only rich young Russians in the 'forties, who had lost their parents at an early age, could be. Neither physical nor moral fetters of any kind existed for him; he could do as he liked, he needed nothing and was bound by nothing. Neither family, nor fatherland, nor religion, nor want existed for him. He believed in nothing and acknowledged nothing. But although he believed in nothing he was not a morose or *blasé* young man, nor a bore, but on the contrary was always letting himself be carried away. He had come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as love, yet his heart always overflowed in the presence of any young and attractive woman. He had long been aware that honours and positions were nonsense, yet he could not help being pleased when, at a ball, Prince Sergius came up and spoke to him affably. But he yielded to his impulses only in so far as they did not limit his freedom.

As soon as he had yielded to any influence and became conscious of its leading on to labour and struggle, the petty struggle with life, he instinctively hastened to free himself from the feeling or activity into which he was being drawn, and to regain his freedom. In this way he experimented with society life, the civil service, farming, music—to which at one time he had intended to devote his life—and even with the love of women, in which he did not believe. He meditated on the use to which he should devote that power of youth which is granted to man only once in life, not power of intellect, of feeling, of education, but that sudden impetus which gives a man the power of making himself, or even—as it seemed to him—of making the universe, into anything he wishes: should it be to art, to science, to love of woman, or to practical activities? It is true that some people are devoid of this impulse, and on entering life at once place their necks under the first yoke that offers itself, and honest-

ly labour under it for the rest of their lives. But Olenin was too strongly aware of the presence of that all-powerful God of Youth, that capacity to be entirely transformed into a single aspiration or idea, the capacity to wish and to do, the capacity to throw oneself headlong into a bottomless abyss without knowing why or wherefore. He bore this awareness within himself, was proud of it and, without knowing it, was made happy by it. Up to that time he had loved only himself, and could not help loving himself, for he expected nothing but good of himself, and had not yet had time to be disillusioned. On leaving Moscow he was in that happy state of mind in which a young man, conscious of past mistakes, suddenly says to himself, "That was not the real thing." All that had gone before was accidental and unimportant. Till then he had not really tried to live, but now, with his departure from Moscow, a new life was beginning—a life in which there would be none of the old mistakes, no remorse, and in all probability nothing but happiness.

It is always the case on a long journey that, till the first two or three stages have been passed, imagination continues to dwell on the place left behind, but with the first morning on the road it leaps to the end of the journey, and there begins building castles in the air. So it happened to Olenin.

After leaving the town behind, he gazed at the snowy fields, and felt glad to be alone in their midst. Wrapping himself in his coat, he lay at the bottom of the sledge, became tranquil, and fell into a doze. The parting with his friends had touched him deeply, and memories of that last winter spent in Moscow and images of the past, mingled with vague thoughts and regrets, rose unbidden in his imagination.

He remembered the friend who had seen him off, and his relations with the girl they had talked about. The girl was rich. "How could he love her, knowing that she loved

me?" he thought, and evil suspicions crossed his mind. "There is much dishonesty in men, when one comes to reflect." Then he was confronted by the question: "But really, how is it I have never been in love? Every one tells me that I never have. Can it be that I am a moral freak?" And he began to recall all his infatuations. He recalled his entry into society, and a friend's sister with whom he spent several evenings at a table with a lamp on it which lit up her slender fingers busy with needlework, and the lower part of her pretty delicate face. He recalled their conversations, that dragged on like the game of passing on a stick and trying to keep it alight as long as possible, and the general awkwardness and constraint, and his continual feeling of rebellion at that constraint. Some voice had always whispered: "That's not it, that's not it," and so it had proved. Then he remembered a ball, and the mazurka he danced with the beautiful D——. "How much in love I was that night, and how happy! And how hurt and vexed I was next morning, when I woke and felt myself still free! Why does not love come and bind me hand and foot?" he thought. "No, there is no such thing as love! That neighbour who used to tell me, as she told Dubrovin and the Marshal, that she loved the stars, was not *it* either."

And now his farming and work in the country recurred to his mind, and in those recollections also there was nothing to dwell on with pleasure. "Will they have much to say about my departure?" came into his head; but who "they" were, he did not quite know. Next came a thought that made him wince and mutter incoherently. It was the recollection of M. Cappel, the tailor, and the 678 rubles he still owed him, and he recalled the words in which he had begged him to wait another year, and the look of perplexity and resignation which had appeared on the tailor's face. "Oh, my God, my God!" he repeated, wincing and trying to drive away the intolerable thought.

"And yet, in spite of everything, she loved me," he thought of the girl they had talked about at the farewell supper. "Yes, had I married her I should not now be owing anything, and as it is I am in debt to Vasilyev." Then he remembered the last night he had played with Vasilyev at the club (just after leaving her), and he recalled his humiliating requests for another game, and the other's cold refusal. "A year's economizing, and they will all be paid, and the devil take them! . . ." But despite this assurance he again began calculating his outstanding debts, their dates, and when he could hope to pay them off. "And I owe something to Morelle as well as to Chevalier," he thought, recalling the night when he had run up so large a debt. It was a drinking bout with the gipsies, arranged by some fellows from Petersburg: Sashka B——, the aide-de-camp to the Emperor, Prince D——, and that pompous old fellow. "How is it those gentlemen are so self-satisfied?" he thought. "And what right have they to form a clique, to which they think others must be highly flattered to be admitted? Is it because they are attached to the Emperor's staff? Why, it's disgusting what fools and scoundrels they consider other people to be! At any rate I have shown them that I, on the contrary, have no wish to share their intimacy. All the same, I fancy my estate manager would be amazed to know that I am on familiar terms with a man like Sashka B——, a colonel and an aide-de-camp to the Emperor! Yes, and no one drank more than I did that evening, and I taught the gipsies a new song, and every one listened to it. I may have done many foolish things, but I am still a very good fellow."

Morning found him at the third post-stage. He drank tea, and himself helped Vanyusha to move his bundles and trunks, and sat down among them, composed, erect, and clear-headed, knowing where all his belongings were, how much money he had and where it was, where he had

put his passport and the order for the post-horses, and the toll-gate papers; and it all seemed to him so well arranged that he grew quite cheerful and the long journey before him began to seem like an extended pleasure-trip.

All that morning and noon he was deep in calculations of how many versts he had travelled, how many remained to the next stage, how many to the first town, to the place where he would dine, to the place where he would drink tea, and to Stavropol, and what fraction of the whole journey was already accomplished. He also calculated how much money he had with him, how much would be left over, how much would pay off all his debts, and what proportion of his income he would spend each month. Towards evening, after tea, he calculated that to Stavropol there still remained seven-elevenths of the whole journey; that his debts would require seven months' economy and one-eighth of his whole fortune; and then, having relieved his mind, he wrapped himself up, lay down in the sledge, and again dozed off. His imagination was now turned to the future: to the Caucasus. All his dreams of the future were associated with heroes like Amalat Bek, with Circassian women, mountains, precipices, terrible torrents, and dangers. All these things were vague and dim, but the love of fame and the danger of death furnished the interest of that future. Now, with unprecedented courage and a strength that amazed everyone, he killed and subdued an innumerable host of hillsmen; now he was himself a hillsman, and with them was defending their independence against the Russians. As soon as he pictured anything definite, familiar Moscow figures always appeared on the scene. Sashka B—— appeared among the Russians or the hillsmen and fought against him. Even the tailor, M. Cappel, in some strange way took part in the conqueror's triumph. And when amid all this he remembered his former humiliations, weak-

nesses, and mistakes, the recollection was not disagreeable. It was clear that there among the mountains, waterfalls, fair Circassians, and dangers, such mistakes could not recur. Having once made full confession to himself, there was an end of it all. One other vision, the sweetest of them all, mingled with the young man's every thought of the future—the vision of a woman. And there, among the mountains, she appeared to his imagination as a Circassian slave, a fine figure with long tresses and deep submissive eyes. He pictured a lonely hut in the mountains, and on the threshold *she* stands awaiting him, when, tired and covered with dust, with blood, with fame, he returns to her. He is conscious of her kisses, her shoulders, her sweet voice, and her submissiveness. She is enchanting, but uneducated, wild, and rough. In the long winter evenings he begins her education. She is clever and gifted, and quickly acquires all the knowledge she needs. Why not? She can quite easily learn foreign languages, read the French masterpieces and understand them; *Notre Dame de Paris*, for instance, is sure to please her. She can also speak French. In a drawing-room she can show more innate dignity than a lady of the highest society. She can sing, simply, powerfully, and passionately.... "Oh, what nonsense!" he said to himself. But here they reached a post-station, and he had to change into another sledge and give some tips. But his fancy again began searching for the "nonsense" he had relinquished, and again fair Circassians, glory, and his return to Russia with an appointment as aide-de-camp and a lovely wife, rose before his imagination. "But there's no such thing as love," he told himself. "Fame is all rubbish. But the 678 rubles?... And the conquered territory that will bring me more wealth than I need for a lifetime? It will not be right, though, to keep all that wealth for myself. I shall have to distribute it. But to whom? Well, 678 rubles to Cappel, and then we'll

see. . . ." Quite vague visions now cloud his mind, and only Vanyusha's voice and the stopping of the sledge break his healthy youthful slumber. Scarcely conscious, he changes into another sledge and continues his journey.

Next morning everything goes on just the same: the same kind of post-stations and tea-drinking, the same moving horses' cruppers, the same short talks with Vanyusha, the same vague dreams and drowsiness, and the same tired, healthy youthful sleep at night.

CHAPTER III

The farther Olenin travelled from Central Russia, the farther he left his memories behind; and the nearer he drew to the Caucasus, the lighter his heart became. "I'll stay away for good, and never return to show myself in society," was a thought that sometimes occurred to him. "These people whom I see here are *not people*. None of them knows me, and none of them can ever enter the Moscow society I was in, or find out about my past. And no one in that society will ever know what I am doing, living among these people." And quite a new feeling of freedom from his whole past came over him among the rough beings he met on the road, whom he did not consider to be *people* in the sense that his Moscow acquaintances were.

The rougher the people and the fewer the signs of civilization, the freer he felt. Stavropol, through which he had to pass, irked him. The signboards, some of them even in French, ladies in carriages, cabs in the market-place, and a gentleman wearing a cloak and tall hat who was walking along the boulevard and staring at the passers-by, quite upset him. "Perhaps these people know some of my acquaintances," he thought; and again he remembered the club, his tailor, cards, society. . . . But, after Stavropol, everything was satisfactory—wild and

also beautiful and warlike, and Olenin felt happier and happier. All the Cossacks, the drivers and post-station masters seemed to him simple folk, with whom he could jest and converse freely, without having to consider to what class they belonged. They all belonged to the human race, which unconsciously Olenin loved; and they all treated him in a friendly way.

Already in the province of the Don Cossacks, his sledge had been exchanged for a wheeled vehicle, and beyond Stavropol it became so warm that Olenin travelled without wearing his heavy coat. It was already Spring—an unexpected joyous Spring for Olenin. At night he was no longer allowed to leave the Cossack villages, and they said it was dangerous to travel in the evening. Vanyusha began to be uneasy, and they carried a loaded gun in the troika. Olenin became still more joyful. At one of the post-stations the postmaster told of a terrible murder that had been committed recently on the high road. They began to meet armed men. "So now it begins!" thought Olenin, and kept expecting to see the snowy mountains of which mention was so often made. One evening, the Nogai driver pointed with his whip to the mountains shrouded in clouds. Olenin looked eagerly, but it was dull, and the mountains were almost hidden by the clouds. Olenin made out something grey and white and fleecy, but, try as he would, he could find nothing beautiful in the mountains of which he had so often read and heard. The mountains and the clouds appeared to him quite alike, and he thought the special beauty of the snow peaks, of which he had so often been told, was as much an invention as Bach's music and the love for women, which he did not believe in. So he gave up looking forward to see the mountains.

But early next morning, being awakened in his troika by the freshness of the air, he glanced carelessly to the right. The morning was perfectly clear. Suddenly he saw

about twenty paces away, as it seemed to him at first glance, pure white gigantic masses with delicate contours, the distinct fantastic outlines of their summits etched sharply against the far-off sky. When he had realized the distance between himself and them and the sky, and the whole immensity of the mountains, and felt the infinitude of all that beauty, he became afraid that it was but a phantasm or a dream. He gave himself a shake to rouse himself, but the mountains were still the same.

"What's that? What is it?" he said to the driver.

"Why, the mountains," answered the Nogai driver with indifference.

"I have been looking at them for a long while, too," said Vanuysha. "Aren't they fine? No one will believe it at home."

The speed of the troika along the smooth road caused the mountains to appear to be running along the horizon, while their rosy crests glittered in the light of the rising sun. At first Olenin was only astonished at the sight, then gladdened by it; but later on, gazing more and more intently at this snow-capped chain, which rose not from behind other, black mountains, but straight out of the plain, and glided away into the distance, he began by slow degrees to take in this beauty, and at length to *feel* the mountains. From that moment all he saw, all he thought, and all he felt, acquired for him a new character, sternly majestic, like the mountains! All his Moscow reminiscences, shame and repentance, and his trivial dreams about the Caucasus, vanished and did not return. "Now it has begun," a solemn voice seemed to say to him. The road, and the Terek, just coming into view in the distance, and the Cossack villages and the people, no longer appeared to him as a joke. He glanced at the sky and remembered the mountains. He looked at himself or Vanyusha, and again thought of the mountains.... Two Cossacks ride by, their gun cases swinging rhythmi-

cally at their backs, the white and bay legs of their horses mingling confusedly ... and the mountains! Beyond the Terek rises the smoke from a Chechen *aul*... and the mountains! The rising sun glitters on the Terek winding among the reeds ... and the mountains! From the village comes a bullock cart, and women, beautiful young women, pass by... and the mountains! *Abreks** canter about the plain, and here am I driving along and unafraid of them! I have a gun, and strength, and youth... and the mountains!"

CHAPTER IV

That whole sector of the Terek line (about eighty versts) along which lie the villages of the Greben Cossacks, is uniform in character, both as to the country and the inhabitants. The Terek, which separates the Cossacks from the hill-tribes, still flows turbid and swift though already broad and smooth, always depositing greyish sand on its low reedy right bank, and washing away the steep, though not high, left bank, with its roots of century-old oaks, its rotting plane-trees and young brushwood. On the right bank lie the villages of pacified, though still somewhat restless, Chechens. Along the left bank, half a verst from the river and standing seven or eight versts apart from one another, are Cossack villages. In olden times most of these villages were situated on the bank of the river; but the Terek, shifting northward from the mountains year by year, washed away the bank, and now there remain only the ruins of the old villages, and the orchards of pear- and plum-trees and poplars, all overgrown with blackberry bushes and wild vines. No one lives there now, and one only sees the tracks of the deer, the wolves, the hares, and the pheasants, who have

* Hostile Chechens who crossed over to the Russian bank of the Terek to thieve and plunder.—*Tr.*

come to love these places. From village to village runs a road cut through the forest as a cannon-shot might fly. Along the roads are cordons of Cossacks, and watch-towers with sentinels in them. Only a narrow strip of about seven hundred yards of fertile wooded soil belongs to the Cossacks. To the north of it begin the sand dunes of the Nogai or Mozdok steppe, which stretches far to the north and runs, God knows where, into the Trukhmen, Astrakhan and Kirghiz-Kaisak steppes. To the south, beyond the Terek, are the Great Chechnya mountains, the Kochkalykovsky range, the Black Mountains, yet another range, and at last the snow mountains, which can just be seen but have never yet been scaled. In this fertile wooded strip, rich in vegetation, has dwelt, as far back as memory runs, the warlike, handsome and prosperous Russian tribe belonging to the sect of Old Believers,* and called the Greben Cossacks.

Long, long ago their Old Believer ancestors fled from Russia, and settled beyond the Terek among the Chechens on the Greben, the first range of wooded mountains of the Great Chechnya. Living among the Chechens, the Cossacks intermarried with them, and adopted the manners and customs of the hill-tribes, though they still retained the Russian language in all its purity, as well as their old faith. A tradition, still fresh among them, declares that Tsar Ivan the Terrible came to the Terek, sent for their Elders, and gave them the land on this side of the river, exhorting them to remain friendly to Russia, and promising not to enforce his rule upon them nor oblige them to change their faith. Even now the Cossack families claim relationship with the Chechens, and the love of freedom, of leisure, of plunder and of war, still form their chief characteristics. Only the unfavourable side of Rus-

* Old Believers is a general name for the sects that separated from the Russo-Greek Church in the seventeenth century.—*Tr.*

sian influence is apparent—by interference at elections, by confiscation of church-bells, and by the troops who are quartered in the country, or march through it.

A Cossack is inclined to have less hatred for the *dzhigit** hillsman, who has perhaps killed his brother, than for the soldier quartered on him to defend his village, but who has defiled his hut with tobacco-smoke. He respects his enemy the hillsman, and despises the soldier, who is in his eyes an alien and an oppressor. In reality, from a Cossack's point of view, a Russian peasant is a foreign, savage, despicable creature, of whom he sees a sample in the hawkers who come to the country, and in the Little Russian immigrants whom the Cossack contemptuously calls "woolbeaters." For him to be smartly dressed means to be dressed like a Circassian. The best weapons are obtained from the hillsmen, and the best horses are bought or stolen from them. A dashing young Cossack likes to show off his knowledge of Tartar, and when carousing talks Tartar even to his fellow Cossacks.

In spite of all these things this small Christian clan, stranded in a tiny corner of the earth, surrounded by half-savage Mohammedan tribes and by soldiers, considers itself highly advanced, acknowledges none but Cossacks as human beings, and despises everything else. The Cossack spends most of his time in the cordon, in action, or in hunting and fishing. He hardly ever works at home. When he stays in the village, it is an exception to the general rule, and then he is holiday-making. All Cossacks make their own wine, and drunkenness is not so much a general tendency as a rite, the non-fulfilment of which would be considered apostasy. The Cossack looks upon a woman as an instrument for his welfare; only the

* Among the Chechens, a *dzhigit* is much the same as a *brave* among the Red Indians; but the word is inseparably connected with the idea of skilful horsemanship.—*Tr.*

unmarried girls are allowed to amuse themselves. A married woman has to work for her husband from youth to very old age: his demands on her are the Oriental ones of submission and labour. In consequence of this outlook, women are strongly developed, both physically and mentally; and though they are—as everywhere in the East—nominally in subjection, they possess far greater influence and importance in family life than Western women. The exclusion from public life and inurement to heavy male labour give the women all the more power and importance in the household. A Cossack, who before strangers considers it improper to speak affectionately or needlessly to his wife, when alone with her, is involuntarily conscious of her superiority. His house and all his property, in fact the entire homestead, has been acquired and is kept together solely by her labour and care. Though firmly convinced that labour is degrading to a Cossack, and is only proper for a Nogai labourer or a woman, he is vaguely aware of the fact that all he makes use of and calls his own is the result of that toil, and that it is in the power of the woman (his mother or his wife), whom he considers his slave, to deprive him of all he possesses. Besides, the continuous performance of a man's heavy work and the responsibilities entrusted to them have endowed the Greben women with a peculiarly independent, masculine character, and have remarkably developed their physical powers, common sense, resolution, and stability. The women are in most cases stronger, more intelligent, more developed, and handsomer than the men. A striking feature of a Greben woman's beauty is the combination of the purest Circassian type of face with the broad and powerful build of Northern women. Cossack women wear the Circassian dress: a Tartar smock, *beshmet*,* and soft slippers; but they tie their kerchiefs

* A Tartar tunic with sleeves.—*Tr.*

round their heads in the Russian fashion. Smartness, cleanliness and elegance in dress and in the arrangement of their huts, are with them a custom and a necessity. In their relations with men the women, and especially the unmarried girls, enjoy perfect freedom.

Novomlinskaya village is considered the very heart of Greben Cossackdom. In it more than elsewhere the customs of the old Greben population have been preserved; and its women have from time immemorial been renowned all over the Caucasus for their beauty. A Cossack's livelihood is derived from vineyards, fruit-gardens, water-melon and pumpkin plantations, from fishing, hunting, maize and millet growing, and from the spoils of war. Novomlinskaya village lies about three versts away from the Terek, from which it is separated by dense woods. On one side of the road, which runs through the village, is the river; on the other, green vineyards and orchards, beyond which are seen the dunes of the Nogai steppe. The village is surrounded by earthworks and thorny bramble hedges, and is entered by a tall gate hung on posts and covered with a little reed-thatched roof. Beside it stands, on a wooden gun-carriage, an unwieldy cannon, captured by the Cossacks at some time or other, and which has not been fired for a hundred years. A uniformed Cossack sentinel, with dagger and gun, sometimes stands, and sometimes does not stand, on guard beside the gate, and sometimes presents arms to a passing officer, and sometimes does not.

Below the roof of the gateway is written in black letters on a white board: Houses 266; male inhabitants 897; female 1,012. The Cossacks' houses are all raised on posts two or three feet from the ground. They are carefully thatched with reeds, and have large carved gables. If not new, they are at least all straight and clean, with high porches of different shapes; and they are not built close together but have ample space around

them, and are all picturesquely placed along broad streets and lanes. In front of the big, light windows of many of the houses, beyond the fences, dark green poplars and acacias with their delicate pale verdure and scented white blossoms overtop the houses, and beside them grow bold-faced yellow sunflowers, creepers, and grape-vines. In the broad open square are three shops, where drapery, sunflower and pumpkin seeds, locust beans and ginger-breads are sold; and surrounded by a tall fence, loftier and larger than the other houses, stands, behind a row of tall poplars, the Regimental Commander's dwelling with its casement windows. Few people are to be seen in the streets of the village on week-days, especially in summer. The young men are on duty in the cordons, or on military expeditions; the old ones are fishing or helping the women in the orchards and gardens. Only the very old, the sick, and the children remain at home.

CHAPTER V

It was one of those rare evenings that occur only in the Caucasus. The sun had sunk behind the mountains, but it was still light. The evening glow had spread over a third of the sky, and against its light the dull white immensity of the mountains was sharply defined. The air was rarefied, motionless, and full of sound. The shadow of the mountains reached for several versts over the steppe. The steppe, the opposite side of the river, and the roads were all deserted. If, very occasionally, mounted men appeared, the Cossacks in the cordon and the Chechens in their *auls* (Chechen villages) watched them with surprised curiosity, and tried to guess who such questionable men could be.

At nightfall people from fear of one another flock to their dwellings, and only birds and beasts, fearless of man, prowl in those deserted spaces. Talking merrily, the

women, who have been tying up the vines, hurry away from the gardens before sunset. The vineyards, like all the surrounding district, are deserted, but the villages become very animated at that time of the evening. From all sides, walking, riding, or driving in their creaking carts, people move towards the village. Girls with their smocks tucked up and twigs in their hands, run chatting merrily to the village gates to meet the cattle that are herded together in clouds of dust and mosquitoes which they bring with them from the steppe. The well-fed cows and buffaloes roam about across the streets, and Cossack women in their coloured *beshmets* go to and fro among them. Their merry laughter and shrieks can be heard mingling with the lowing of the cattle. There an armed and mounted Cossack, on leave from the cordon, rides up to a house and, leaning over, knocks on the window. In answer to the knock the handsome head of a young woman appears at the window, and you can hear caressing, laughing voices. There a tattered Nogai labourer, with prominent cheek-bones, brings a load of reeds from the steppes, turns his creaking cart into the Cossack captain's broad and clean courtyard, and lifts the yoke off the oxen, which stand tossing their heads, while he and his master shout to one another in Tartar. Past a puddle that year after year reaches nearly across the street and can only be skirted by clinging to the fences, a barefooted Cossack woman, with a bundle of firewood on her back, makes her laborious way holding her smock high and exposing her white legs. A Cossack returning from shooting calls out in jest: "Lift it higher, hussy!" and points his gun at her. The woman lets down her smock and drops the wood. An old Cossack, returning home from fishing with his trousers tucked up and his hairy grey chest uncovered, has a net across his shoulder full of silvery fish that are still struggling; and, to take a short cut, climbs over his neighbour's broken fence, catching

his coat as he does so. There a woman is dragging a dry branch along, and from round the corner comes the sound of an axe. Cossack children, spinning their tops wherever there is a smooth place in the street, are shrieking; women are climbing over fences to avoid going round. From every chimney rises the fragrant *kizyak** smoke. From every homestead comes the sound of increased bustle, precursor to the stillness of night.

Dame Ulitka, the wife of a Cossack cornet, who is also a school-master, goes out to the gates of her yard, like the other women, and waits for the cattle which her daughter Maryanka is driving along the street. Before she has had time fully to open the gate in the wattle fence, an enormous buffalo cow, enveloped in a cloud of mosquitoes, rushes up bellowing, and squeezes in. Several well-fed cows slowly follow her, their large eyes gazing with recognition at their mistress as they swish their sides with their tails.

The beautiful and finely built Maryanka enters at the gate and, throwing away her switch, quickly slams the gate to and rushes with all the speed of her nimble feet to separate and drive the cattle into their sheds. "Take off your slippers, you devil's wench!" shouts her mother, "you'll wear them into holes!" Maryanka is not at all offended at being called a "devil's wench," but, accepting it as a term of endearment, cheerfully goes on with her task. Her face is covered with a kerchief tied round her head. She is wearing a pink smock and a green *beshmet*. She disappears inside the lean-to shed in the yard, following the big fat cattle; and from the shed comes her voice as she speaks gently and persuasively to the buffalo: "Won't you stand still? What a creature! Come now, come, old dear!" Soon the girl and the old woman pass from the shed to the outhouse, carrying two large pots of milk,

* Fuel made of dried dung.—*Tr.*

the day's yield. From the chimney of the outhouse rises a thin cloud of *kizyak* smoke: the milk is being used to make clotted cream. The girl stacks up the fire, while her mother goes to the gate. Twilight has fallen on the village. The air is full of the smell of vegetables, cattle, and fragrant *kizyak* smoke. Cossack women hurry along the streets, carrying burning rags. From the yards, one hears the snorting and quiet champing of the cattle, eased of their milk; while in the yards and street only the voices of women and children can be heard calling to one another. It is rare on a week-day to hear the drunken voice of a man.

One of the Cossack wives, a tall, masculine old woman, approaches Dame Ulitka from the house opposite, and asks her for a light. In her hand she holds a rag.

"Well, got your work done?"

"The girl is lighting the fire. Is it a light you want?" says Dame Ulitka, proud of being able to oblige her neighbour.

Both women enter the hut, and horny hands, unused to dealing with small articles, tremblingly remove the lid of the precious match-box, a rarity in the Caucasus. The masculine-looking new-comer sits down on the door-step, with the evident intention of having a chat.

"Where is your man—at the school?" she asked.

"Yes, he is always teaching the youngsters. But he writes that he will be home for the festival," said Dame Ulitka.

"Yes, he is a clever man; that's all to the good."

"Of course it is."

"And my Lukashka is at the cordon; they won't let him come home," said the visitor, though Dame Ulitka had known all this long ago. She wanted to talk about her Lukashka, whom she had lately fitted out for service in the Cossack regiment, and whom she wished to marry to Dame Ulitka's daughter, Maryanka.

"So he's at the cordon?"

"He is. He's not been home since last festival. The other day I sent him some shirts by Fomushkin. He says he's all right, and that his superiors are satisfied. He says they are looking out for *abreks* again. Lukashka is quite happy, he says."

"Well, thank God for that," said the cornet's wife, "*Urvan* is certainly the only word for him." Lukashka was nicknamed *Urvan*, or 'the Snatcher,' because of his bravery in snatching a drowning boy out of the water, and Dame Ulitka alluded to this, wishing in her turn to say something agreeable to Lukashka's mother.

"I thank God that he's a good son! He is a brave lad, everyone praises him," said Lukashka's mother. "All I wish is to get him married; then I could die in peace."

"Well, aren't there plenty of young women in the village?" answered the shrewd Dame Ulitka, as she carefully replaced the lid of the match-box with her horny hands.

"Plenty, plenty," remarked Lukashka's mother, shaking her head. "There's your girl now, your Maryanka—that's the sort of girl! There's not another like her in the whole region!"

Dame Ulitka knows what Lukashka's mother is after; but though she believes Lukashka to be a good Cossack, she hangs back: first because she is a cornet's wife and rich, while Lukashka is the son of a simple Cassack and fatherless; secondly because she does not want to part with her daughter yet; but chiefly, because propriety demands it.

"Well, when Maryanka grows up she'll be marriageable too," she answers soberly and modestly.

"I'll send the matchmakers to you—I'll send them! Only let me get the vineyard done, and then we'll come

and make our bows to you," says Lukashka's mother. "And we'll make our bows to Ilya Vasilyevich too."

"Ilya, indeed!" says the cornet's wife proudly. "It is to me you must speak. All in its own good time."

Lukashka's mother sees by the stern face of the cornet's wife that it is not the time to say anything more just now, so she lights her rag with the match, and says, rising: "Don't refuse us, remember what you have said. Well, I must be off; it is time to light the fire."

As she crosses the road, swinging the burning rag, she meets Maryanka, who bows.

"Ah, she's a regular queen, a splendid worker, that girl!" she thinks, looking at the beautiful girl. "What need for her to grow any more? It's time she was married, and into a good home; married to Lukashka!"

But Dame Ulitka has her own cares, and she remains sitting on the threshold, thinking hard about something, till the girl calls her.

CHAPTER VI

The male population of the village spend their time on military expeditions and in the cordon—or "at the posts," as the Cossacks say. Towards evening, that same Lukashka the *Urvan*, about whom the old women had been talking, was standing on a watch-tower of the Nizhne-Prototsky post, situated on the very banks of the Terek. Leaning on the railing of the tower and screwing up his eyes, he looked, now far into the distance, beyond the Terek, now down at his fellow Cossacks, and occasionally exchanged a word with them. The sun was already approaching the snowy range that gleamed white above the fleecy clouds. The clouds undulating at the base of the mountains grew darker and darker. The clearness of evening was noticeable in the air. A sense of freshness came from the woods, though round the post it was still

hot. The voices of the talking Cossacks vibrated more sonorously than before and seemed to linger in the air. The moving mass of the Terek's rapid brown waters contrasted more vividly with its motionless banks. The waters were beginning to subside, and here and there the wet sands gleamed drab on the banks and in the shallows. The other side of the river, just opposite the outpost, was deserted; only an immense waste of low-growing reeds stretched far away to the very foot of the mountains. On the low bank, a little to one side, could be seen the flat-roofed clay houses and the funnel-shaped chimneys of a Chechen village. The sharp eyes of the Cossack who stood on the watch-tower followed, through the evening smoke of the peaceful village, the tiny moving figures of the Chechen women, visible from afar in their red and blue garments.

Although the Cossacks expected *abreks* to cross over and attack them from the Tartar side at any moment, especially as it was May, when the woods by the Terek are so dense that it is difficult to pass through them on foot and the river is shallow enough in places for a horseman to ford it; and although, a couple of days before, a Cossack had arrived with a circular from the commander of the regiment, announcing that scouts had reported the intention of a party of some eight men to cross the Terek, and ordering special vigilance—no special vigilance was being observed in the cordon. The Cossacks, unarmed and with their horses unsaddled, just as if they were at home, spent their time, some in fishing, some in drinking, and some in hunting. Only the horse of the man on duty was saddled and, with its feet hobbled, was loping about by the brambles near the wood; and only the sentinel had his Circassian coat on and carried a gun and sword. The corporal, a tall thin Cossack with an exceptionally long back and small hands and feet, was sitting on the earth-bank of a hut, with his

beshmet unbuttoned. His face wore the lazy, bored expression of a superior, and, having shut his eyes, he let his head loll upon the palm first of one hand and then of the other. An elderly Cossack, with a broad greyish-black beard, wearing a shirt belted with a black leather strap, was stretched out by the river, gazing lazily at the waves of the Terek as they swirled monotonously by. Others, also overcome by the heat and half-undressed, were rinsing clothes in the Terek, plaiting bridles, or humming tunes as they lay on the hot sand of the river-bank. One Cossack, with a thin face burnt black by the sun, lay near the hut; he was evidently dead drunk, for the wall by which he lay, though it had been in shadow some two hours previously, was now exposed to the sun's fierce slanting rays.

Lukashka, who stood on the watch-tower, was a tall handsome lad about twenty years old, and very like his mother. His face, indeed his whole build, in spite of the angularity of youth, indicated great strength, both physical and moral. Though he had only lately joined the Cossacks at the front, it was evident from the expression on his face and the calm assurance of his attitude that he had already acquired the somewhat proud and warlike bearing peculiar to Cossacks and to men generally who are in the habit of carrying arms; and that he felt he was a Cossack and was well aware of his own worth. His ample Circassian coat was torn in some places; his cap was on the back of his head, Chechen-fashion, and his leggings were turned down below his knees. His attire was not rich, but he wore it with that peculiar Cossack dash which arises from imitating the Chechen *dzhigit*. Everything on a real *dzhigit* is ample, ragged, and neglected; only his weapons are costly. But these ragged clothes and these weapons are belted and worn with a certain air and matched in a certain manner, neither of which can be acquired by everybody, and which at once

strikes the eye of a Cossack or a hillsman. Lukashka had this resemblance to a *dzhigit*. With his hands resting on his sword, and his eyes nearly closed, he kept looking at the distant *aul*. Taken separately, his features were not handsome, but anyone who saw his fine bearing and his dark-browed intelligent face, would involuntarily say, "What a fine fellow!"

"Look at the women, what a lot of them are walking about in the village," he said in a sharp voice, idly showing his brilliant white teeth, and not addressing anyone in particular. But Nazarka, who was lying below, immediately lifted his head, and remarked:

"They must be going for water.".

"Supposing I scared them with a shot?" said Lukashka, laughing. "Wouldn't they be frightened?"

"It wouldn't reach."

"What! Mine would carry beyond. Just wait a bit, and when their feast comes round I'll go and visit Girei Khan and drink *buza** with him," said Lukashka, angrily swishing away the mosquitoes which clung about him.

A rustling in the thicket drew the Cossacks' attention. A spotted mongrel setter, with its nose to the ground and wagging its hairless tail, came running to the cordon. Lukashka recognized the dog as one belonging to his neighbour, Uncle Yeroshka, a hunter, and soon he saw, following the dog through the thicket, the approaching figure of the hunter himself.

Uncle Yeroshka was a giant of a Cossack with a broad snow-white beard, and such broad shoulders and chest that in the wood, where there was no one with whom to compare him, he did not look particularly tall, so well proportioned were his powerful limbs. He wore a tattered coat and, over the bands with which his feet were swathed, sandals made of undressed deer's hide, fastened

* Tartar beer made of millet.—*Ed.*

with twine; on his head he had a rough little white cap. He carried over one shoulder a screen to hide behind when shooting pheasants, and a bag containing a hen for luring hawks, and a small falcon; over the other shoulder, attached by a strap, was a wild cat he had killed; and stuck in his belt behind were a little bag containing bullets, gunpowder and bread; a horse's tail to swish away the mosquitoes; a large dagger in a torn scabbard smeared with old blood stains, and two dead pheasants. Glancing at the cordon, he halted.

"Hi, Lyam!" he called to the dog in such a ringing bass that it awoke an echo far away in the wood; and throwing over his shoulder his huge percussion musket, of the kind the Cossacks call a *flinta*, he raised his cap.

"Had a good day, good people?" he said, addressing the Cossacks in the same strong and cheerful voice, quite without effort but as loudly as if he were shouting to someone on the other bank of the river.

"Good enough, Uncle!" young Cossack voices answered cheerfully from all sides.

"What have you seen? Come on, tell us all about it!" shouted Uncle Yeroshka, wiping the sweat from his broad red face with the sleeve of his coat.

"There's a hawk living in the plane-tree here, Uncle. As soon as night comes he begins hovering round," said Nazarka, winking and jerking his shoulder and leg.

"Is there really?" said the old man incredulously.

"There is, Uncle! You just stay and watch," replied Nazarka with a laugh.

The other Cossacks began laughing.

The wag had not seen any hawk at all, but it had long been the custom of the young Cossacks in the cordon to tease and mislead Uncle Yeroshka every time he came to them.

"Eh, you fool, always lying!" Lukashka called from the tower to Nazarka.

Nazarka was immediately silenced.

"It must be watched. I'll watch," answered the old man, to the great delight of all the Cossacks. "You haven't seen any boars, have you?"

"Watching for boars!" said the corporal, bending forward and scratching his back with both hands, very pleased at the chance of some distraction. "It's *abreks* we're after here, and not boars! You've not heard anything, Uncle, have you?" he added, needlessly screwing up his eyes and showing his close-set white teeth.

"*Abreks*?" said the old man. "Nay, I've not. Well, have you got any *chikhir*?* Let me have a drink, there's a good man. I'm worn out. When the time comes, I'll bring you some fresh meat, believe me. I will. Give me a drink," he repeated.

"Well, and are you going to watch?" inquired the corporal, as though he had not heard what the other said.

"I did mean to watch tonight," replied Uncle Yeroshka. "Maybe, with God's help, I shall kill something for the festival. Then you'll have your share, you shall indeed!"

"Uncle! Hullo, Uncle!" called out Lukashka sharply from above, attracting everybody's attention. All the Cossacks looked up at him. "Just go to the upper watercourse, there's a fine herd of boars there. No, I'm not making it up! The other day one of our Cossacks shot one there. I'm telling you the truth," he added, readjusting the musket at his back, and in a tone that showed he was not joking.

"Ah! Lukashka the *Urvan* is here!" said the old man, looking up. "Where was this Cossack of yours shooting?"

"Didn't you see me? I suppose I'm too small for you!" said Lukashka. "Close by the ditch," he went on seriously, with a shake of the head. "We were just going along the ditch when we heard something crackling, but my

* Home-made Caucasian wine.—*Tr.*

gun was in its case. Then Ilya let fly. . . . But I'll show you the place, it's not far. You just wait a bit. I know every one of their paths. . . . Uncle Mosev," he said turning resolutely and almost commandingly to the corporal, "It's time to relieve guard!" and, slinging his gun over his shoulder, he began to descend from the watch-tower without waiting for the order.

"Come down!" said the corporal, after Lukashka had started, and glanced round. "Is it your turn, Gurka? Up you go. . . . True enough, your Lukashka has become a real hunter," he went on, addressing the old man. "He keeps going about just like you, never stays at home. The other day he killed a boar."

CHAPTER VII

The sun had already set, and the shadows of night were rapidly spreading from the edge of the wood. The Cossacks finished their occupations round the cordon, and gathered in the hut for supper. Only the old man still remained under the plane-tree, watching for the hawk and pulling the string tied to the falcon's leg, but though a hawk was really perching on the plane-tree it declined to swoop down on the lure. Lukashka, singing one song after another, was leisurely rigging nets among the very thickest brambles to trap pheasants. In spite of his tall stature and big hands, every kind of work, fine or rough, prospered under Lukashka's fingers.

"Hullo, Luka!" came Nazarka's shrill, sharp voice calling him from the thicket close by. "The Cossacks have gone in to supper." And Nazarka, with a live pheasant under his arm, forced his way through the brambles and emerged on the foot-path.

"Oho!" said Lukashka, breaking off in his song, "where did you get that cock pheasant? I suppose it was in my trap?"

Nazarka was of the same age as Lukashka, and he, too, had been at the front only since the previous spring. He was plain, thin and puny, with a shrill voice that rang in one's ears. They were neighbours and comrades. Lukashka was sitting on the grass, cross-legged like a Tartar, adjusting his nets.

"I don't know whose it was—yours, I expect."

"Was it beyond the pit, by the plane-tree? Then it is mine! I set the nets last night."

Lukashka rose and examined the captured pheasant. After stroking the dark burnished head of the bird, which rolled its eyes and stretched out its neck in terror, Lukashka took the pheasant in his hands.

"We'll have it in a *pilav* tonight. You go and kill and pluck it."

"Shall we eat it ourselves, or give it to the corporal?"

"He's had plenty!"

"I don't like killing them," said Nazarka.

"Give it here!"

Lukashka drew a little knife from under his dagger and gave it a swift jerk. The bird fluttered, but before it could spread its wings the bleeding head bent and quivered. "That's the way to do it!" said Lukashka, throwing down the pheasant. "It will make a fat *pilav*."

Nazarka shuddered as he looked at the bird.

"I say, Lukashka, that devil will be sending us to lie in ambush again tonight," he said, taking up the bird. (He was alluding to the corporal.) "He has sent Fomushkin to get wine, and it ought to be his turn. We have to go night after night! He always puts it on us."

Lukashka went whistling along the cordon. "Take that string with you," he shouted; and Nazarka obeyed.

"I'll give him a bit of my mind today, I really will," continued Nazarka. "Let's say we won't go; we're tired out, and there's an end of it! No, really, you tell him; he'll listen to you. It's too bad!"

"Get along with you! What a thing to make a fuss about!" said Lukashka, evidently thinking of something else. "Rubbish, man! If he made us turn out of the village at night now, that would be annoying. There you can have some fun, but here, what is there to do anyway? It's all one whether we're in the cordon or in ambush. What a chap you are!"

"And are you going to the village?"

"I'll go for the festival."

"Gurka says your Dunaika is carrying on with Fomushkin," said Nazarka suddenly.

"Well, let her go to the devil," said Lukashka, showing his regular white teeth, though he did not laugh. "As if I couldn't find another!"

"Gurka says he went to her house. Her husband was out, and there was Fomushkin sitting and eating pie. Gurka stopped awhile and then went away; and passing by the window he heard her say, 'He's gone, the devil. . . . Why don't you eat your pie, dear? You needn't go home for the night,' she says. And Gurka under the window says, 'Well, I like that!' "

"You're making it up."

"No, it's God's truth!"

"Well, if she's found another, let her go to the devil," said Lukashka after a pause. "There's no lack of girls, and I was sick of her anyway."

"Well, see what a devil you are!" said Nazarka. "You should make up to the cornet's girl, Maryanka. Why doesn't she walk out with anyone?"

Lukashka frowned. "Huh, Maryanka! They're all alike," he said.

"Well, you just try. . . ."

"What do you think? Aren't there enough girls in the village?"

And Lukashka resumed his whistling, and went along the cordon, pulling leaves from the bushes as he went.

Suddenly, catching sight of a smooth sapling, he drew the knife from the handle of his dagger and cut it down. "What a ramrod it will make," he said, swinging the sapling till it whistled through the air.

The Cossacks were sitting round a low Tartar table on the earthen floor of the clay-plastered outer room of the hut, when the question of whose turn it was to lie in ambush was raised.

"Who is to go tonight?" shouted one of the Cossacks, through the open door, to the corporal in the next room.

"Yes, who is it?" the corporal shouted back. "Uncle Burlak has been, so has Fomushkin," he said, not quite confidently. "You two had better go, you and Nazarka," he went on, addressing Lukashka. "And Yergushov will go too; he must have slept it off by now."

"You don't sleep it off yourself, so why should he?" said Nazarka in a subdued voice.

The Cossacks laughed.

Yergushov was the Cossack who had been lying drunk and asleep near the hut. He had only that moment staggered into the room, rubbing his eyes.

Lukashka had already risen, and was getting his gun ready.

"Off you go now! Finish your supper and go!" said the corporal; and without waiting for an expression of consent he shut the door, evidently not expecting the Cossacks to obey. "Of course," he said, "if I hadn't been ordered to, I wouldn't send anyone; but an officer might turn up at any moment. As it is, they say eight *abreks* have crossed over."

"Well, I suppose we must go," remarked Yergushov, "it's the regulation. Can't be helped in times like these. I say we must go."

Meanwhile Lukashka, holding a big piece of pheasant to his mouth with both hands and glancing now at Na-

zarka, now at the corporal, seemed quite indifferent to what passed, and only laughed at them both. Before the Cossacks were ready to go into ambush, Uncle Yeroshka, who had been vainly waiting under the plane-tree till night fell, entered the dark room.

"Well, lads," his loud bass resounded through the low-roofed room, drowning all the other voices, "I'm going with you. You'll watch for Chechens, and I for boars!"

CHAPTER VIII

It was quite dark when Uncle Yeroshka and the three Cossacks, in their cloaks and with their guns over their shoulders, left the cordon and went towards the place on the Terek where they were to lie in ambush.

Nazarka did not want to go at all, but Lukashka shouted at him, and they soon started. After they had gone a few steps in silence, the Cossacks turned aside from the ditch and went along a path almost hidden by reeds, till they reached the river. On the bank lay a thick black log cast up by the water. The reeds around it had been recently beaten down.

"Shall we lie here?" asked Nazarka.

"Why not?" answered Lukashka. "Sit down here, and I'll be back in a minute. I'll only show Uncle where to go."

"This is the best place; here we can see and not be seen," said Yergushov, "so it's here we'll lie. It's just the place!"

Nazarka and Yergushov spread out their cloaks and settled down behind the log, while Lukashka went on with Uncle Yeroshka.

"It's not far from here, Uncle," said Lukashka, stepping softly in front of the old man; "I'll show you where they've been—I'm the only one that knows."

"That's the way! You're a fine fellow, a regular *Urvan*!" replied the old man, also whispering.

Having gone a few steps, Lukashka stopped, bent down over a puddle, and whistled. "That's where they came to drink, d'you see?" He spoke in a scarcely audible voice, pointing to fresh hoofprints.

"Lord bless you," answered the old man. "The boar will be in the hollow beyond the ditch," he added. "I'll watch, and you can go."

Lukashka pulled his cloak up higher and walked back alone, throwing swift glances, now to the left at the wall of reeds, now to the Terek rushing by below the bank. "I daresay there's one of them watching or creeping about somewhere," he thought of a possible Chechen hillsman. Suddenly a loud rustling and a splash in the water made him start and seize his musket. A boar leapt out grunting from under the bank, its dark shape outlined for a moment against the glassy surface of the water and then disappearing among the reeds. Lukashka pulled out his gun and aimed; but, before he could fire, the boar had disappeared in the thicket. Lukashka spat with vexation, and went on. On approaching the ambuscade he halted again, and whistled softly. His whistle was answered and he stepped up to his comrades.

Nazarka had curled up on his cloak and was already asleep. Yergushov sat with his legs crossed, and moved slightly to make room for Lukashka.

"Being in ambush is fine! It's really a good place," he said. "Did you take him there?"

"I showed him where," answered Lukashka, spreading out his cloak. "But what a big boar I roused just now, right by the water! I expect it was the very one! You must have heard the noise it made?"

"I heard it all right. I knew at once it was game. I thought to myself: 'Lukashka has roused some game,'" Yergushov said, wrapping himself up in his cloak. "Now

I'll go to sleep," he added. "Wake me when the cocks crow. We must have discipline. I'll lie down and have a nap; and then you will have a nap and I'll watch—that's the way."

"I don't want to sleep," answered Lukashka.

The night was dark, warm, and still. Only on one side of the sky the stars were shining; the other and greater part was overcast by a huge black cloud, stretching from the mountain-tops. There was no wind and, blending with the mountains, the cloud drifted slowly onwards, its curved edges sharply defined against the deep starry sky. Only in front of him could the Cossack make out the Terek and the distance beyond. Behind, and on both sides, he was surrounded by a wall of reeds. Occasionally the reeds would sway and rustle against one another, apparently without cause. Seen from below, against the clear part of the sky, their waving tufts looked like the feathery branches of trees. Close in front, at his very feet, was the bank, and at its base the rushing torrent. A little farther on was the moving mass of glassy brown water, which eddied rhythmically along the bank and round the shallows. Farther still, water, bank and cloud all merged together in impenetrable gloom. Along the surface of the water floated black shadows, in which the experienced eyes of the Cossack detected tree-trunks carried down by the current. Only very rarely summer lightning, mirrored in the water as in a black glass, disclosed the sloping bank opposite. The rhythmic sounds of night, the rustling of the reeds, the snoring of the Cossacks, the hum of mosquitoes, and the rushing of water, were every now and then broken by a shot fired in the distance, or by the gurgling of water when a piece of bank slipped down, the splash of a big fish, or the noise of an animal breaking through the thick undergrowth in the wood. Once an owl flew past along the Terek, flapping one wing against the other rhythmically at every

second beat. Just above the Cossacks' heads it turned towards the wood, and then, striking its wings, no longer after every other flap but at every flap, it flew to an old plane-tree, where it rustled about for a long time before settling down among the branches. At every one of these unexpected sounds the watching Cossack listened intently, screwing up his eyes as he felt deliberately for his musket.

The greater part of the night was past. The black cloud that had moved westward parted raggedly, revealing the clear starry sky, and the golden upturned crescent of the moon shone above the mountains with a reddish glow. The cold began to be penetrating. Nazarka awoke, muttered something, and fell asleep again. Lukashka, feeling bored, got up, drew the small knife from the haft of his dagger, and began to fashion his stick into a ramrod. His head was full of the Chechens who lived over there in the mountains, and of how their brave lads came across and were not afraid of the Cossacks, and might even now be crossing the river at some other spot. Several times he thrust himself out of his hiding-place and looked along the river, but could see nothing. And as he continued looking out at intervals upon the river and at the opposite bank, now faintly distinguishable from the water in the uncertain moonlight, he no longer thought about the Chechens, but only of when it would be time to wake his comrades and go home to the village. In the village, he imagined Dunya, his *little soul*, as the Cossacks call their mistresses, and thought of her with vexation. Silvery mists, a sign of the coming dawn, glittered white above the water, and not far from him young eagles were whistling and flapping their wings. At last the crowing of a cock reached him from the distant village, followed by the long-sustained note of another, which was again answered by yet other voices.

"Time to wake them," thought Lukashka, who had finished his ramrod and felt his eyes growing heavy. Turning to his comrades he had just managed to make out which pair of legs belonged to whom, when it suddenly seemed to him that he heard something splash on the other side of the Terek. He turned again towards the horizon beyond the hills, where day was breaking under the upturned crescent of the moon, glanced at the outline of the opposite bank, at the Terek, and at the now distinctly visible drift-wood upon it. For an instant it seemed to him that he was moving and that the Terek with the drifting wood remained stationary. Again he peered out. One large black log with a branch particularly attracted his attention. The log was floating in a strange way right down the middle of the stream, neither rocking nor whirling. It even appeared not to be floating altogether with the current, but to be crossing it in the direction of the shallows. Lukashka craned his neck and watched it intently. The log floated to the shallows, stopped, and shifted in a peculiar manner. Lukashka thought he saw an arm stretched out from underneath.

"Supposing I killed an *abrek* all by myself!" he thought, and picking up his gun, with a swift, unhurried movement put up his gun-rest, placing the gun upon it, and holding it noiselessly in position. Cocking the trigger, he held his breath and began to take aim, his eyes searching the darkness.

"I won't wake them," he thought. But his heart began beating so fast that he hesitated, listening. Suddenly the log gave a plunge and began again to float across the stream towards him.

"I mustn't miss! . . ." he thought, and now by the faint light of the moon he caught a glimpse of a Tartar's head in front of the floating wood. He aimed straight at the head. It appeared to be quite near—just at the end of his gun-barrel. He raised his eye from the sights. "Right

enough, it is an *abrek*!" he thought joyfully, and suddenly, rising to his knees, he again took aim. Having found the mark, just visible at the end of his long musket, he said: "In the name of the Father and the Son," in the Cossack way learnt in his childhood, and pulled the trigger. A brilliant flash lit up for an instant the reeds and the water, and the sharp, abrupt report of the shot was carried across the river, changing into a prolonged roll somewhere in the far distance. The log now floated not across, but with the current, rocking and whirling.

"Hold him, I say!" exclaimed Yergushov, feeling for his musket and raising himself behind the log near which he had been lying.

"Shut up, you devil!" whispered Lukashka, grinding his teeth. "*Abreks*!"

"Who have you shot?" asked Nazarka. "Who was it, Lukashka?"

Lukashka did not answer. He was reloading his gun and watching the floating log. A little way off, it stopped on a sandbank, and from behind it something large, that rocked in the water, came into view.

"What did you shoot? Why don't you speak?" insisted the Cossacks.

"*Abreks*, I tell you!" said Lukashka.

"Don't give us that! Did the gun go off? . . ."

"I've killed an *abrek*, that's what I've done," muttered Lukashka in a voice choked by emotion, as he jumped to his feet. "A man was swimming. . ." he said, pointing to the sandbank. "I killed him. Just look there."

"Don't give us that tale!" said Yergushov again, rubbing his eyes.

"Don't what? Look there," said Lukashka, seizing him by the shoulders and pulling him with such force that Yergushov groaned.

He looked in the direction in which Lukashka pointed and, discerning the body, immediately changed his tone.

"Oh my! But there'll be more to come! Believe me," he said softly, and began examining his musket. "That was a scout swimming across; either the others are here already, or they're not far off on the other side, believe me!"

Lukashka was unfastening his belt and taking off his Circassian coat.

"What are you up to, you idiot?" exclaimed Yergushov. "If you as much as show yourself, you'll be lost, and all for nothing, believe me! If you've killed him, he won't escape. Let me have a little powder for my musket-pan. Have you got any? Nazar, you go back to the cordon, and look alive; but don't go along the bank, or you'll be killed, believe me."

"Catch me going alone! Go yourself!" said Nazarka angrily.

Lukashka took off his coat and went down to the bank.

"Don't go in, I tell you!" said Yergushov, priming his gun. "Look, he's not moving. I can see. It's nearly morning; wait till they come from the cordon. You'd better go back, Nazarka. You're afraid! Don't be afraid, I tell you."

"Luka, I say, Lukashka! Tell me how you did it!" said Nazarka.

Lukashka changed his mind about going into the water.

"Go quick to the cordon, and I will watch. Tell the Cossacks to send out the patrol. If the *abreks* are on this side, they must be caught."

"That's what I say. They'll get away," said Yergushov, rising. "They must be caught!"

Yergushov and Nazarka rose and, crossing themselves, started off for the cordon—not along the river-bank, but breaking their way through the brambles to reach a path in the wood.

"Now mind, Lukashka, don't stir—they may cut you down here, so you'd best keep a sharp look-out!" Yergushov said, as he was leaving.

"Go along, I know," muttered Lukashka; and having examined his gun, he again sat down behind the log.

Lukashka remained alone, and sat gazing at the shallows and listening for the Cossacks; but it was some distance to the cordon, and he was tormented by impatience. He kept thinking that the other *abreks* who had been with the one he had killed would escape. He was annoyed with the *abreks* who were going to escape, just as he had been with the boar that had escaped the evening before. He glanced round and at the opposite bank, expecting every moment to see a man; and having arranged his gun-rest, he was ready to fire. The idea that he might himself be killed never entered his head.

CHAPTER IX

It was growing light. The Chechen's body was now clearly visible, rocking gently in the shallow water. Suddenly the reeds rustled not far from Luka, and he heard steps and saw the feathery tops of the reeds moving. He set his gun at full cock, and muttered: "In the name of the Father and of the Son." As the gun clicked, the sound of footsteps ceased.

"Hullo, Cossacks! Don't kill your Uncle!" said a deep bass voice calmly; and, moving the reeds apart, Uncle Yeroshka came up close to Luka.

"I very nearly killed you, by God I did!" said Lukashka.

"What have you shot?" asked the old man. His sonorous voice resounded through the wood and along the river, suddenly dispelling the mysterious quiet of night that had surrounded the Cossack. It was as if everything had suddenly become lighter and more distinct.

"There now, Uncle, you have not seen anything, but I've killed a beast," said Lukashka, uncocking his gun and getting up with unnatural calmness.

The old man was staring intently at the white back, now clearly visible with the Terek rippling round it.

"He was swimming with a log on his back. But I spotted him and then.... Look there. There! He's got blue trousers, and a gun, I think.... Do you see?" Luka asked.

"Of course, I see!" said the old man angrily, and a serious and stern expression appeared on his face. "You've killed a *dzhigit*," he said, apparently with regret.

"Well, I sat here, and suddenly saw something dark on the other side. I spotted him when he was still over there. It was as if a man had come there and fallen in. Strange, I thought to myself. And then a piece of driftwood, a good-sized piece, comes floating, not with the stream, but across it; and what do I see but a head appearing from under it! Very strange! So I looked out from the reeds, but could see nothing; then I got up, and he must have heard me, the devil, and crept out into the shallow and looked about. 'No, you don't!' I said, as soon as he landed and looked round. 'You won't get away!' And I felt as if I was choking! I got my gun ready, but did not stir, and looked out. He waited a little and then swam out again; and when he came into the moonlight I could see his whole back. 'In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost'... and through the smoke I saw him struggling. He moaned, or so it seemed to me. 'Ah,' I thought, 'the Lord be thanked, I've killed him!' And when he drifted to the sandbank I could see him distinctly; he tried to get up, but couldn't. He struggled a bit, and then lay down. I saw everything. Look, he does not move—he must be dead! The others have gone back to the cordon in case there should be any more of them."

"And so you got him!" said the old man. "He is far away now, my lad!..." And again he shook his head sadly.

Just then they heard the sound of breaking bushes and the loud voices of Cossacks approaching along the bank

on horseback and on foot. "Have you brought the boat?" shouted Lukashka.

"You're a trump, Luka! Lug it to the bank!" shouted one of the Cossacks.

Without waiting for the boat, Lukashka began to undress, keeping an eye all the while on his prey.

"Wait a bit, Nazarka is bringing the boat," shouted the corporal.

"You fool! Maybe he is alive and only shamming! Take your dagger with you!" shouted another Cossack.

"Get along," cried Luka, pulling off his trousers. He quickly undressed and, crossing himself, plunged into the river. Then with long strokes of his white arms, lifting his back high out of the water and breathing deeply, he swam across the Terek towards the shallows. A crowd of Cossacks stood on the bank, talking loudly. Three horsemen rode off to patrol. The boat appeared round a bend. Lukashka stood up on the sandbank, bent over the body, and shook it twice. "He's dead all right!" he shouted in a shrill voice.

The Chechen had been shot in the head. He had on a pair of blue trousers, a shirt, and a Circassian coat, and a gun and dagger were tied to his back. Above all these a large branch was tied, the one that had at first deceived Lukashka.

"What a carp you've landed!" cried one of the Cossacks who had assembled in a circle, as the body was lifted out of the boat and laid on the bank, pressing down the grass.

"How yellow he is!" said another.

"Where have our fellows gone to search? I expect the rest of them are on the other bank. If this one had not been a scout he wouldn't have swum that way. Why else should he swim alone?" said a third.

"Must have been a smart one, to offer himself before the others; a regular *dzhigit*!" said Lukashka mockingly,

as he stood shivering at the bottom of the bank, wringing out his wet clothes. "His beard is dyed, and he's cropped."

"And he had his coat tied in a bag to his back to make it easier for him to swim," said someone.

"Look here, Lukashka," said the corporal, who was holding the dagger and gun taken from the dead man. "Keep the dagger for yourself and the coat too; but I'll give you three silver rubles for the gun. You see the barrel's not much good," he said, blowing into the muzzle. "I only want it as a souvenir."

Lukashka did not answer. Evidently this sort of begging annoyed him, but he knew it could not be avoided.

"The devil!" he said, frowning and throwing down the Chechen's coat. "He might at least have had a good coat. This is just a rag."

"It'll do to fetch firewood in," said one of the Cossacks.

"Mosev, I'll go home," said Lukashka, evidently forgetting his vexation and wishing to gain some advantage out of having to give a present to his superior.

"All right, you may go."

"Take the body back to the cordon, lads," said the corporal, still examining the gun, "and put a shelter over him from the sun. They may send down from the mountains to ransom it."

"It isn't hot yet," said someone.

"And what if a jackal gets at him? That wouldn't be very good, would it?" remarked another Cossack.

"We'll set a watch; it won't do for him to have been torn, if they come to buy him back."

"Well, Lukashka, say what you like, you must stand a pail of vodka for the lads," said the corporal gaily.

"Of course! That's the custom," chimed in the Cossacks. "See what luck God has sent you! Never seen anything of life yet and you've killed an *abrek*!"

"Buy the dagger and coat, and don't be stingy, and I'll let you have the trousers too," said Lukashka. "They're too tight for me; he was a skinny devil."

One Cossack bought the coat for a ruble, and another gave the price of two pails of vodka for the dagger.

"Drink, lads! I'll stand you a pail!" said Lukashka. "I'll bring it myself from the village."

"And cut up the trousers into kerchiefs for the girls!" said Nazarka.

The Cossacks burst out laughing.

"That's enough laughing!" said the corporal. "And take the body away. Are you going to leave the rotten thing by the hut?"

"What are you standing there for? Haul him along, lads!" shouted Lukashka in a commanding voice to the Cossacks, who reluctantly took hold of the body, obeying him as though he were their chief. After dragging the body along for a few steps, the Cossacks let the legs fall. They dropped lifelessly to the ground. Stepping apart, the Cossacks then stood silent for a few moments. Nazarka stepped forward and straightened the head, which was turned to one side, so that the round wound above the temple and the whole of the dead man's face were visible.

"See what a mark it made, right in the brain," he said. "He'll not get lost. His owners will always know him!"

No one answered, and again the Angel of Silence flew over the Cossacks.

The sun had risen high and its splintered rays shone on the dewy green. Near by, the Terek murmured in the awakened forest, and, greeting the morning, the pheasants called to one another. The Cossacks stood still and silent around the dead man, gazing at him. The brown body, with nothing on but the wet blue trousers held by a girdle over the sunken stomach, was well-shaped and

handsome. The muscular arms lay by his sides; the bluish, freshly shaven round head with the clotted wound on one side of it, was thrown back. The smooth tanned brow contrasted sharply with the shaven part of the head. The open glassy eyes stared upwards with fixed pupils, seeming to gaze past everything. Under the red, trimmed moustache, the fine lips, drawn at the corners, seemed stiffened into a smile of shrewd, good-natured raillery. The thin wrists were covered with red hairs, the fingers were bent inward, and the nails were dyed red.

Lukashka had not yet dressed. He was wet. His neck was redder and his eyes brighter than usual; his broad cheeks trembled, and from his healthy body a barely perceptible steam rose in the fresh morning air.

"He, too, was a man!" he muttered, evidently admiring the corpse.

"Yes, if you had fallen into his hands, you wouldn't have had any mercy," said one of the Cossacks.

The Angel of Silence had taken wing. The Cossacks began bustling about and talking. Two of them went to cut down bushes for a shelter, others strolled towards the cordon. Lukashka and Nazarka ran to get ready to go to the village.

Half an hour later Lukashka and Nazarka were on their way homewards, talking incessantly, and almost running through the dense woods which separated the Terek from the village.

"Mind, don't tell her I sent you. Just go and find out if her husband is at home," Lukashka was saying in his sharp voice.

"And I'll go round to Yamka too," said the devoted Nazarka. "We'll have a spree, shall we?"

"When should we have one, if not today?" Lukashka replied.

When they reached the village the two Cossacks drank and lay down to sleep till evening.

CHAPTER X

On the third day after the events above described, two companies of a Caucasian infantry regiment arrived at the Cossack village of Novomlinskaya. The horses had been unharnessed, and the companies' wagons were standing in the square. The cooks had dug a pit and with firewood gathered from various yards (where it had not been sufficiently securely stored) were now cooking the food; the sergeant-majors were calling the roll. The Service Corps men were driving posts into the ground for tethering the horses; and the quarter-masters were going about the streets just as if they were at home, showing officers and men to their quarters.

There were green ammunition boxes in a line, there were company wagons and horses, there were cauldrons in which porridge was being cooked. There was a captain and a lieutenant and the sergeant-major, Onisim Mikhailovich. And since all this was in a Cossack village where, so it was reported, the companies had been ordered to take up their quarters, everyone felt themselves at home.

But why they were stationed there; who the Cossacks were; and whether they wanted the troops to be there; and whether they were Old Believers or not—was all quite immaterial. Released from duty, tired out and covered with dust, the soldiers noisily and in disorder, like a swarm of bees about to settle, spread over the squares and streets.

Quite regardless of the Cossacks' ill will, chattering merrily, and with their muskets clinking, by twos and threes they entered the huts and hung up their equipment, unpacked their bags, and joked with the women. At their favourite spot, round the porridge-cauldrons, a large group of soldiers assembled, and with little pipes between their teeth, gazed, now at the smoke thickening into white clouds as it rose towards the hot sky, now at the camp-

starched collar, his neck was clasped by the red band of his silk *beshmet*. He wore Circassian dress, but did not wear it well, and anyone would have known him for a Russian and not a *dzhigit*. It was the thing—but not the real thing. But for all that, his whole person breathed health, joy, and self-satisfaction.

"Yes, it seems funny to you," said Vanyusha, "but just try to talk to these people yourself. They set themselves against you and there's an end of it. You can't get as much as a word out of them." Vanyusha angrily threw down a pail on the threshold. "Somehow they don't seem like Russians."

"You should speak to the chief of the village."

"But I don't know where he lives," said Vanyusha in an offended tone.

"Who has upset you so much?" asked Olenin, looking round.

"The devil only knows. Faugh! There is no real master here. They say he has gone to some *kriga** or other, and the old woman is a real devil. God preserve us!" answered Vanyusha putting his hands to his head. "How we shall live here, I don't know. They are worse than Tartars, I'm sure—and they call themselves Christians! A Tartar is bad enough, but all the same he is more noble. Gone to the *kriga* indeed! What this *kriga* of theirs is I don't know!" concluded Vanyusha, and turned aside.

"Not the same as the servants' quarters at home, eh?" chaffed Olenin without dismounting.

"May I have your horse, please?" said Vanyusha, evidently perplexed by this new order of things, but resigning himself to his fate.

"So a Tartar is more noble, eh, Vanyusha?" repeated Olenin, dismounting and slapping the saddle.

"It's all very well for you to laugh! You think it funny," muttered Vanyusha angrily.

* A place on the river-bank fenced in for fishing.—*Ed.*

"Come, don't be angry, Vanyusha," replied Olenin, still smiling. "Wait a minute, I'll go and speak to the people of the house; you'll see, I shall arrange everything. You don't know what a jolly life we shall have here. Only don't get upset."

Vanyusha did not answer. Screwing up his eyes, he looked contemptuously after his master, and shook his head. Vanyusha regarded Olenin merely as a master, and Olenin regarded Vanyusha merely as a servant; and they would both have been much surprised if anyone had told them that they were friends, as they really were without knowing it themselves. Vanyusha had been taken into his master's house when he was only eleven, and when Olenin was the same age. When Olenin was fifteen he gave Vanyusha lessons for a time, and taught him to read French, of which the latter was inordinately proud; and when in specially good spirits he still let off French words, always laughing stupidly when he did so.

Olenin ran up the steps of the porch and pushed open the door of the hut. Maryanka, wearing only a pink smock, as all Cossack women do in the house, jumped away from the door in fright and, pressing herself against the wall, covered the lower part of her face with her broad sleeve. Opening the door wider, Olenin saw in the semi-darkness of the passage the tall shapely figure of the young Cossack girl. With the quick and eager curiosity of youth, he involuntarily noticed the firm maidenly form revealed by the thin print smock, and the beautiful black eyes fixed on him with childlike terror and wild curiosity.

"This is *she*," thought Olenin. "But there will be many others like her," came at once into his head, and he opened the inner door.

Old Dame Ulitka, also dressed only in a smock, was stooping, with her back turned to him, sweeping the floor.

"Good day to you, Mother! I've come about my lodgings," he began.

The Cossack woman, without unbending, turned her severe but still handsome face towards him.

"What have you come here for? Want to mock at us, eh? I'll teach you to mock; may the black plague seize you!" she shouted, looking askance from under her frowning brow at the new-comer.

Olenin had at first imagined that the way-worn, gallant Caucasian Army (of which he was a member) would be everywhere joyfully received, and especially by the Cossacks, their comrades in war; and he therefore felt perplexed at this reception. Without losing his presence of mind, however, he tried to explain that he meant to pay for his lodgings, but the old woman would not give him a hearing.

"What have you come for? Who wants a pest like you, with your scraped jowl? You just wait a bit; when the master returns he'll show you your place. I don't want your dirty money! Money indeed! As if we had never seen any! You'll stink the house out with your vile tobacco, and want to put it right with money! Haven't we seen pests like you before! May you be shot in your bowels and your heart!" the old dame shrieked piercingly, giving Olenin no chance to speak.

"It seems Vanyusha was right!" thought Olenin. "A Tartar would be nobler." And, followed by Dame Ulitka's abuse, he went out of the hut. As he was leaving, Maryanka, still wearing only her pink smock, but with her face now hidden right up to her eyes in a white kerchief, suddenly slipped out from the passage past him. Pattering rapidly down the steps with her bare feet, she ran down from the porch, stopped, and, looking hastily with laughing eyes at the young man, vanished round the corner of the hut.

Her firm youthful step, the untamed look of her eyes glistening from under the white kerchief, and her lithe

compact figure struck Olenin even more powerfully than before.

"Yes, she is the one," he thought, and troubling his head still less about the lodgings, he kept looking round at Maryanka as he approached Vanyusha.

"There you see, the girl is as savage as the rest of them, just like a wild filly!" said Vanyusha, who, though still busy with the baggage, had now cheered up a little. "*La femme*!" he added in a loud triumphant voice, and burst out laughing.

CHAPTER XI

Towards evening the master of the house returned from his fishing, and having learnt that the cadet would pay for the lodging, pacified the old woman and satisfied Vanyusha's demands.

Everything was settled in the new quarters. Their hosts moved into the winter house and let their summer hut to the cadet for three rubles a month. Olenin had something to eat and went to sleep. Towards evening he woke up, washed, and having made himself tidy, dined, then lit a cigarette and sat down by the window that looked on to the street. It was cooler. The slanting shadow of the hut with its ornamented gables fell across the dusty road, and even climbed the base of the wall of the house opposite, the steep reed-thatched roof of which gleamed in the rays of the setting sun. The air grew fresher. Everything was peaceful in the village. The soldiers had settled down and become quiet. The herds had not yet been driven home, and the people had not returned from their work.

Olenin's lodging was situated almost at the end of the village. At rare intervals, from somewhere far beyond the Terek in the direction from which Olenin had come (in the Chechen Mountains or on the Kumyk plain), came

muffled sounds of firing. Olenin was feeling very well contented after three months of bivouac life. His newly-washed face felt fresh and his powerful body clean (an unaccustomed sensation after the campaign), and in all his rested limbs he was conscious of a feeling of tranquillity and strength. His mind, too, felt fresh and clear. He thought of the campaign and of past dangers. He remembered that he had faced them no worse than other men, and that he was accepted as a comrade among valiant Caucasians. His Moscow recollections were left behind, Heaven knows how far! The old life was wiped out, and a quite new life had begun in which there were, as yet, no mistakes. Here, as a new man among new men, he could gain a new and good reputation. He was conscious of a youthful and unreasoning joy of life. Looking now out of the window at the boys spinning their tops in the shadow of the house, now round his new little lodging, he thought how pleasantly he would settle down to this new Cossack village life. Now and then he glanced at the mountains and the sky, and an appreciation of the solemn grandeur of nature mingled with his reminiscences and dreams. His new life had begun, not as he had imagined it would when he left Moscow, but unexpectedly well. The mountains, the mountains, the mountains!—they were the background to all his thoughts and feelings.

"He's kissed his dog good-bye! He's licked the jug! ... Uncle Yeroshka has kissed his dog!" suddenly the little Cossacks, who had been spinning their tops under the window, shouted, looking towards the side-street.

"He's kissed his dog, and sold his dagger for drink!" shouted the boys, crowding together and stepping backwards.

These shouts were addressed to Uncle Yeroshka, who, with his gun on his shoulder and some pheasants dan-

gling at his girdle, was returning from his shooting expedition.

"I have done wrong, lads, I have!" he said, vigorously swinging his arms and looking up at the windows on both sides of the street. "I let the dog go for drink; it was wrong," he repeated, evidently vexed, but pretending not to care.

Olenin was surprised by the boys' behaviour towards the old hunter, but was still more struck by the expressive, intelligent face and the powerful build of the man whom they called Uncle Yeroshka.

"Here Uncle, here Cossack!" he called. "Come here!"

The old man looked into the window and stopped.

"Good evening, good friend," he said, lifting his little cap off his cropped head.

"Good evening, good friend," replied Olenin. "What is it the youngsters are shouting at you?"

Uncle Yeroshka came up to the window. "Why, they're teasing an old man. Never mind, I like it. Let them joke about their old uncle," he said with those firm musical intonations with which old and venerable people speak. "Are you the commander of the troops?" he added.

"No, I am a cadet. But where did you kill those pheasants?" asked Olenin.

"I bagged these three hens in the forest," answered the old man, turning his broad back towards the window, to show the hen-pheasants, which were hanging with their heads tucked into his belt and staining his coat with blood.

"Have you never seen any?" he asked. "Take a brace, if you like! Here you are." And he handed two of the pheasants in at the window. "Are you a hunter yourself?" he asked.

"I am. During the campaign I shot four."

"Four? A great number!" said the old man sarcastically. "And are you a drinker? Do you drink *chikhir*?"

"Why not? I like a drink."

"Ah, I see you are a fine young fellow. We shall be *kunaks*,* you and I," said Uncle Yeroshka.

"Step in," said Olenin. "We'll have a drop of *chikhir*."

"I might as well," said the old man, "but take the pheasants." The old man's face showed that he liked the cadet. He had seen at once that he could get free drinks from him, and that the brace of pheasants would not be wasted.

Soon Uncle Yeroshka's figure appeared in the doorway of the hut; and it was only then that Olenin became fully conscious of the enormous size and massive build of this man, whose red-brown face, with its perfectly white broad beard, was furrowed by the deep lines of age and toil. For an old man, the muscles of his legs, arms, and shoulders were quite exceptionally large and prominent. There were deep scars on his head, under the short-cropped hair. His thick sinewy neck was covered with deep intersecting folds like a bull's. His horny hands were bruised and scratched. He stepped lightly and easily over the threshold, unslung his gun and placed it in a corner, and casting a rapid glance round the room, noted the value of the goods and chattels deposited in the hut, and with out-turned toes stepped softly, in his sandals of raw hide, into the middle of the room. He brought with him a strong but not unpleasant smell of *chikhir*, vodka, gunpowder, and congealed blood.

Uncle Yeroshka bowed down before the icons, smoothed his beard, and approaching Olenin, held out his thick brown hand. "*Koshkildi*," he said. "That is Tartar for 'Good day'—'Peace be unto you,' it means in their tongue."

"*Koshkildi*! I know that," answered Olenin, shaking hands.

* *Kunak*—a sworn friend for whose sake no sacrifice is too great.—*Tr.*

"No, you don't, you don't know the proper way, you fool!" said Uncle Yeroshka, shaking his head reproachfully. "If anyone says '*Koshkildi*' to you, you must reply '*Allah rasi bo sun*,' that is, 'God save you.' That's the way, man, and not '*Koshkildi*.' But I'll teach you all about it. We had a fellow, Ilya Moseich, here, one of your Russians, he and I were *kunaks*. He was a grand fellow! A drunkard, a thief, a hunter—and what a hunter! I taught him everything."

"And what will you teach me?" asked Olenin, who was becoming more and more interested in the old man.

"I'll take you hunting, and teach you to fish. I'll show you Chechens, and find a girl for you, if you like—even that! That's the sort I am! I'm a joker!"—and the old man laughed. "I'll sit down. I'm tired. *Karga*?" he added, inquiringly.

"And what does *karga* mean?" asked Olenin.

"Why, that means 'all right' in Georgian. But I say it just so. It is a way I have, it's my favourite word. *Karga*, *karga*. I say it just so; in fun I mean. Well, man, won't you order the *chikhir*? You've got an orderly, haven't you? Hey, Ivan!" shouted the old man. "All your soldiers are Ivans. Is yours Ivan?"

"True enough, his name is Ivan—Vanyusha.* Here Vanyusha! Please get some *chikhir* from our landlady, and bring it here."

"Ivan or Vanyusha, it's all the same. Why are all your soldiers Ivans? Ivan, old fellow," said the old man, "you tell them to give you some from the barrel they have just begun. They have the best *chikhir* in the village. But don't give more than thirty kopeks for it, mind, because that old witch would be only too glad.... Our people are a cursed, stupid lot," Uncle Yeroshka continued in a confidential tone after Vanyusha had gone out. "They do not

* Vanyusha is a diminutive form of Ivan.—*Tr.*

look upon you as men; you are worse than a Tartar in their eyes. 'Worldly Russians,' they say. But as for me; though you are a soldier, you are still a man, and have a soul in you. Isn't that right? Ilya Moseich was a soldier; yet what a treasure of a man he was! Isn't that so, friend? That's why our people don't like me; but I don't care! I'm a merry fellow, and I like everybody. I'm Yeroshka; yes, my friend."

And the old Cossack patted the young man affectionately on the shoulder.

CHAPTER XII

Vanyusha, who meanwhile had finished his housekeeping arrangements and had even got shaved by the company's barber and had pulled his trousers out of his high boots as a sign that the company was stationed in comfortable quarters, was in excellent spirits. He looked attentively, but not benevolently, at Yeroshka, as at a wild beast he had never seen before, shook his head at the floor which the old man had dirtied, and, having taken two bottles from under a bench, went to the landlady.

"Good evening, kind people," he said, having made up his mind to be very gentle. "My master has sent me to get some *chikhir*, will you draw some for me, good folk?"

The old woman gave no answer. The girl, who was arranging a kerchief on her head before a little Tartar mirror, looked round at Vanyusha in silence.

"I'll pay money for it, honoured people," said Vanyusha, jingling the coppers in his pocket. "Be kind to us and we, too, will be kind to you," he added.

"How much?" asked the old woman abruptly.

"A pint."

"Go and draw some for them, dear," said Dame Ulitka to her daughter. "Take it from the cask that's begun, my precious."

The girl took the keys and a decanter, and went out of the house with Vanyusha.

"Tell me, who is that young woman?" asked Olenin, pointing to Maryanka who was passing the window. Uncle Yeroshka winked and nudged the young man with his elbow.

"Wait a bit," he said, and reached out of the window. "Ahem," he coughed, then bellowed, "Maryanka dear. Hullo, Maryanka, my girlie, won't you love me, darling? I'm a joker," he added in a whisper to Olenin.

The girl, not turning her head and swinging her arms regularly and vigorously, passed the window with the peculiarly elegant and bold gait of a Cossack woman, and only turned her dark shaded eyes slowly towards the old man.

"Love me, and you'll be happy," shouted Yeroshka, and, winking, he looked questioningly at the cadet. "I'm a fine fellow, I'm a joker!" he added. "She's a regular queen, that girl. Eh?"

"She is lovely," said Olenin. "Call her in here!"

"No, no," said the old man. "That one is to be married to Lukashka. He is a fine Cossack, a brave, he killed an *abrek* the other day. I'll find you a better one. I'll find you one that will go about dressed in silk and silver. Once I've said it, I'll do it. I'll get you a regular beauty."

"You, an old man—and you say such things," replied Olenin. "Why, it's a sin!"

"A sin? Where's the sin?" said the old man emphatically. "A sin to look at a nice girl? A sin to have some fun with her? Or is it a sin to love her? Is that so in your parts? . . . No, my friend, it's not a sin, it's salvation! God made you, and God made the girl, too. He made it all; so it is no sin to look at a nice girl. That's what she was made for—to be loved and to give joy. That's how I judge it, friend."

Having crossed the yard and entered a cool dark storeroom filled with barrels, Maryanka went up to one of them and, repeating the usual prayer, plunged a dipper into it. Vanyusha, standing in the doorway, smiled as he looked at her. He thought it extremely funny that she had only a smock on, close-fitting behind and tucked up in front, and still funnier that she wore a necklace of silver coins. He thought this quite un-Russian, and that they would all laugh in the serfs' quarters at home, if they saw a girl like that. "*La fille comme c'est très bien*, for a change," he thought. "I'll tell that to the master."

"What are you standing in the light for, you devil!" the girl suddenly shouted. "Why don't you hand me the decanter!"

Having filled the decanter with cool red wine, Maryanka handed it to Vanyusha.

"Give the money to Mother," she said, pushing away the hand in which he held the money.

Vanyusha laughed. "Why are you so cross, my dear?" he said good-naturedly, irresolutely shuffling with his feet while the girl was covering the barrel.

She began to laugh.

"And you! Are you kind?"

"We, my master and I, are very kind," Vanyusha answered decidedly. "We are so kind that wherever we have stayed our hosts have always been very grateful. It's because he's a nobleman."

The girl stood listening.

"And is your master married?" she asked.

"No. The master is young and unmarried, because noble gentlemen can never marry young," Vanyusha said instructively.

"Too young! A great fat buffalo like him, and too young to marry! Is he the chief of you all?" she asked.

"My master is a cadet; that means he is not yet an officer, but he is more important than a general—he's

an important man! Our colonel, and even the Tsar himself, knows him," Vanyusha explained proudly. "We are not like those other beggars of the line regiment, and his father was a senator. He had more than a thousand serfs, all his own, and they send us a thousand rubles at a time. That's why every one likes us. Another may be a captain, but have no money. What's the use of that?"

"Go, I'll lock up," said the girl, interrupting him.

Vanyusha brought Olenin the wine and announced that "*La fille c'est très jolie,*" and laughing stupidly, at once went out.

CHAPTER XIII

Meanwhile the tattoo had sounded in the village square. The people had returned from their work. The herd lowed, as in clouds of golden dust it crowded at the village gate. Girls and the women hurried through the streets and yards, driving in their cattle. The sun had quite hidden itself behind the distant snowy peaks. A pale bluish shadow spread over land and sky. Above the darkened orchards, faint stars were kindling, and the sounds were gradually hushed in the village. The cattle having been attended to and left for the night, the women came out and gathered at the corners of the streets and, cracking sunflower seeds in their teeth, settled down on the earthen banks of the houses. Later on, Maryanka, having finished milking a buffalo and the two cows, also joined one of these groups. The group consisted of several women and girls and one old Cossack man. They were talking about the *abrek* who had been killed. The Cossack was narrating and the women questioning him.

"I expect he'll get a handsome reward," said one of the women.

"Of course. It's said that they'll award him a cross."

"Mosev did try to wrong him though. Took the gun away from him; but the authorities at Kizlyar heard of it."

"A mean creature that Mosev is!"

"They say Lukashka has come home," remarked one of the girls.

"He and Nazarka are merry-making at Yamka's." (Yamka was an unmarried, disreputable Cossack woman who kept a dram-shop.) "I heard say they had drunk half a pailful."

"What luck that *Urvan* has," somebody remarked. "A real snatcher. But there's no denying he's a fine lad, smart enough for anything, a right-minded lad! His father was just like that, Uncle Kiryak was; he takes after his father. When he was killed the whole village mourned. Look, there they are," added the speaker, pointing to the Cossacks who were coming down the street towards them. "And Yergushov has also managed to come along with them! The drunkard!"

Lukashka, Nazarka, and Yergushov, having emptied half a pail of vodka, were coming towards the girls. The faces of all three, but especially that of the old Cossack, were redder than usual. Yergushov was reeling and kept laughing and nudging Nazarka in the ribs.

"Why aren't you singing?" he shouted to the girls. "Sing to our merry-making, I tell you!"

They were welcomed with the words, "Had a good day? Had a good day?"

"Why should we sing? It's not a holiday," said one of the women. "You're tight, so you go and sing."

Yergushov roared with laughter and nudged Nazarka. "You'd better sing. And I'll begin too. I'm clever at it, I tell you."

"What, gone to sleep, my beauties?" said Nazarka. "We've come from the cordon to celebrate. We've already drunk Lukashka's health."

Lukashka, when he reached the group, slowly raised his cap and stopped in front of the girls. His broad cheekbones and neck were red. He spoke softly and sedately,

but in his tranquillity and sedateness there was more of animation and strength than in all Nazarka's loquacity and bustle. He reminded one of a playful colt, that with a snort and a flourish of its tail suddenly stops short and stands as though all its four feet are nailed to the ground. Lukashka stood quietly in front of the girls; his eyes laughed, and he spoke but little as he glanced now at his drunken companions and now at the girls.

When Maryanka joined the group he raised his cap with a firm deliberate movement, gave way to her, and then stepped in front of her with one foot a little forward and with his thumbs in his belt, toying with his dagger. Maryanka answered his greeting with a leisurely bow of her head, settled down on the earth-bank, and took some seeds out of the bosom of her smock. Lukashka, keeping his eyes fixed on Maryanka, slowly cracked seeds and spat out the shells. There was a hush when Maryanka joined the group.

"Have you come for long?" asked a woman, breaking the silence.

"Till tomorrow morning," Lukashka replied gravely.

"Well, may God grant you good fortune," said the old Cossack; "I'm glad for you, as I've just been saying."

"And I say so too," put in the tipsy Yergushov, laughing. "What a lot of guests we have," he added, pointing to a soldier who was passing by. "The soldiers' vodka is good—I like it."

"They've sent three of the devils to us," said one of the women. "Grandad went to the village elders, but they say nothing can be done."

"Aha! Run into trouble, have you?" said Yergushov.

"I expect they have smoked you out with their tobacco?" asked another woman. "Smoke as much as you like in the yard, I say, but we won't allow it inside the hut. Not if the elder himself comes; I won't allow it. Besides, they may

rob you. He's not quartered any of them on himself, no fear, that devil's son of an elder.

"You don't like it, eh?" Yergushov began again.

"And I've also heard say that the girls will have to make the soldiers' beds and offer them *chikhir* and honey," said Nazarka, putting one foot forward and tilting his cap like Lukashka.

Yergushov burst into a roar of laughter, and seizing the girl nearest to him, embraced her. "I tell you true."

"Now then, you sticker!" squealed the girl, "I'll tell your old woman."

"Tell her," he shouted. "That's quite right what Nazarka says; a circular has been sent round. He can read, you know. Quite true!" And he began embracing the next girl.

"Where are you getting to, you beast?" squealed the rosy, round-faced Ustenka, laughing and lifting her arm to hit him.

The Cossack stepped aside, and nearly fell. "There, they say girls have no strength, and you nearly killed me."

"Get away, you sticker, what devil brought you from the cordon?" said Ustenka, and turning away from him she again burst out laughing. "You were asleep and missed the *abrek*, didn't you? Suppose he had done for you: it would have been all the better."

"You'd have howled, I expect," said Nazarka, laughing.

"Howled! A likely thing."

"Just look, she doesn't care. She'd howl, Nazarka, wouldn't she?" said Yergushov.

Lukashka all this time had stood silently looking at Maryanka. His gaze evidently embarrassed the girl. "Well, Maryanka! I hear they've quartered one of the chiefs on you?" he said, drawing nearer.

Maryanka, as was her wont, waited before she replied, and slowly raised her eyes to the Cossacks. Lukashka's eyes were laughing, as if something special, apart from

what was said, was taking place between himself and the girl.

"Yes, it's all right for them, they have two houses," replied an old woman on Maryanka's behalf, "but at Fomushkin's now, they also have one of the chiefs quartered on them, and they say one whole corner is packed full of his things, and the family have nowhere to go. Was such a thing ever heard of, turning a whole horde loose in the village like this?" she said. "And what the plague are they going to do here?"

"I've heard say they'll build a bridge across the Terek," said one of the girls.

"And I've been told that they will dig a pit to put the girls in, because they don't love the lads," said Nazarka, approaching Ustenka; and he again made a whimsical gesture which set everybody laughing, and Yergushov, passing by Maryanka, who was next in turn, began to embrace an old woman.

"Why don't you hug Maryanka? She's next," said Nazarka.

"No, my old one is sweeter," shouted the Cossack, kissing the struggling old woman.

"You'll throttle me," she screamed, laughing.

The tramp of regular footsteps at the other end of the street interrupted their laughter. Three soldiers in their cloaks, with their muskets on their shoulders, were marching in step to relieve guard by the ammunition wagon.

The Corporal, an old cavalry man, looked angrily at the Cossacks and led his men straight towards where Lukashka and Nazarka were standing in the middle of the road, so that they should have to get out of the way. Nazarka moved, but Lukashka only screwed up his eyes and turned his broad back, without moving from his place.

"People are standing here, so you go round," he muttered, only half turning his head and throwing a contemptuous

glance at the soldiers. The soldiers passed by in silence, keeping step regularly along the dusty road. Maryanka began laughing, and all the other girls joined in.

"What swells!" said Nazarka. "Just like a lot of priests." And he walked a few steps down the road, imitating the soldiers. Again everyone broke into peals of laughter.

Lukashka slowly came up to Maryanka. "And where have you put up the chief?" he asked.

Maryanka thought for a moment. "We've let him have the new hut," she said.

"And is he old or young?" asked Lukashka, sitting down beside her.

"Do you think I've asked?" answered the girl. "I went to get him some *chikhir*, and saw him sitting by the window with Uncle Yeroshka. Red-headed he seemed. They've brought a whole cart-load of things." And she dropped her eyes.

"How glad I am that I managed to get away from the cordon!" said Lukashka, moving closer to the girl and looking straight in her eyes all the time.

"And have you come for long?" asked Maryanka, smiling slightly.

"Till the morning. Give me some seeds," he said, holding out his hand.

Maryanka now smiled outright, and unfastening the neckband of her smock, said, "Don't take them all."

"I felt so lonely all the time without you, I swear I did," he said in a restrained, calm whisper, helping himself to some seeds out of the bosom of the girl's smock; and stooping still closer over her, he continued with laughing eyes to talk to her in low tones.

"I won't come, I tell you," Maryanka suddenly said aloud, leaning away from him.

"No really ... I wanted to tell you something," whispered Lukashka. "Honestly! Do come!"

Maryanka shook her head, but did so with a smile.

"Maryanka! Maryanka! Mummy is calling! Supper-time!" shouted Maryanka's little brother, running towards the group.

"I'm coming," replied the girl. "Go, my dear, go alone—I'll come in a minute."

Lukashka rose and lifted his cap.

"I expect I had better go home too, that will be best," he said, trying to appear unconcerned but hardly able to repress a smile, and he disappeared round the corner of the house.

Meanwhile, night had closed over the village. Bright stars were scattered across the dark sky. The streets were dark and empty. Nazarka remained with the women on the bank, and their laughter could still be heard, but Lukashka, having slowly moved away from the girls, crouched down like a cat and then suddenly started running lightly, holding his dagger to steady it; he did not run homeward, however, but towards the cornet's house. Having passed two streets he turned into a lane, and lifting the skirt of his coat he sat down on the ground in the shadow of a fence. "A regular cornet's daughter!" he thought about Maryanka. "Won't even have a lark—the devil! But just wait a bit."

The approaching footsteps of a woman attracted his attention. He began listening, and laughed to himself.

Maryanka, with bowed head, striking the palings of the fences with a switch, was walking with swift regular strides straight towards him. Lukashka rose. Maryanka halted with a start.

"Oh, you wretch! How you frightened me! So you didn't go home?" she said, and laughed aloud.

Lukashka put one arm round her and with the other hand raised her face. "What I wanted to tell you, by heaven!" His voice trembled and broke.

"What are you talking of, at night-time!" answered Maryanka. "Mummy is waiting for me, and you'd better go to your sweetheart." And, freeing herself from his arms, she ran away a few steps. When she had reached the wattle fence of her home, she stopped and turned to the Cossack, who was running beside her and still trying to persuade her to stay a while with him.

"Well, what do you want to say, you night-bird?" And she again began laughing.

"Don't laugh at me, Maryanka! By heaven! Well, what if I have a sweetheart? The devil take her! Only say the word and I'll love you—I'll do anything you wish. Hear this!" And he jingled the money in his pocket. "Now we can live splendidly. Others enjoy themselves, but what about me? I get no pleasure from you, Maryanka dear!"

The girl did not answer. She stood before him, breaking her switch into little bits with rapid movements of her fingers.

Lukashka suddenly clenched his teeth and fists. "Why all this waiting! Don't I love you, woman! You can do what you like with me," he said suddenly, frowning angrily and seizing both her hands.

The calm expression of Maryanka's face and her calm voice did not change.

"Don't show off, Lukashka, but listen to me," she answered, not pulling away her hands, but holding the Cossack at arm's length. "I'm a girl, sure enough, but you listen to me! It's not for me to decide, but if you love me I'll tell you something. Let go my hands, I'll tell you without that. I'll marry you, but you'll never get any nonsense from me," said Maryanka without turning her face.

"Marry me? Marriage does not depend on us. Love me, Maryanka dear," said Lukashka, from sullen and furious becoming again gentle, submissive, and tender, and smiling as he looked closely into her eyes. Maryanka clung to him and kissed him firmly on the lips. "Dear!" she

whispered, pressing him convulsively to her. Then, suddenly, tearing herself away, she ran into the gate of her house without looking round.

In spite of the Cossack's entreaties to wait another minute to hear what he had to say, Maryanka did not stop.

"Go," she cried. "We'll be seen! I do believe that devil of a lodger is walking about the yard."

"The cornet's daughter," thought Lukashka. "She will marry me. Marriage is all very well, but why can't she just love me!"

He found Nazarka at Yamka's, and after drinking awhile with him, went to Dunaika's house, where, in spite of her unfaithfulness to him, he spent the night.

CHAPTER XIV

It was quite true that Olenin had been walking about the yard when Maryanka entered the gate, and had heard what she said about "that devil of a lodger." He had spent all the evening with Uncle Yeroshka in the porch of his new lodging. He had had a table, a samovar, wine and a lighted candle brought out, and over a glass of tea and a cigar he listened to the tales the old man told, seated on the threshold at his feet. Though the air was still, the candle dripped and flickered, now lighting up the post of the porch, now the table and crockery, now the cropped white head of the old man. Moths circled round the flame, and dust sprinkled from their wings, as they fluttered on the table and in the glasses, now flying into the candle flame, now disappearing into the black space beyond. Olenin and Yeroshka had emptied five bottles of *chikhir*. Yeroshka filled the glasses every time, offering one to Olenin, drinking his health, and talking untiringly. He told of Cossack life in the old days; of his father, "The Broad," who alone had carried on his back a boar's carcass weighing three hundredweight, and could drink

two pails of *chikhir* at one sitting. He told of his own days and his friend Girchik, with whom, during the plague, he used to smuggle felt cloaks across the Terek. He told how one morning he had killed two deer, and about his sweetheart who used to run to him at the cordon at night. He told all this so eloquently and picturesquely that Olenin did not notice how time passed. "Ah, yes, friend, you did not know me in my prime; then I'd have shown you things. Today it's 'Yeroshka licks the jug,' but then Yeroshka was famous throughout the whole regiment. Whose was the finest horse? Who had a Gurda* sword? Who was the man to drink with, and have a spree? Who should be sent to the mountains to kill Ahmet Khan? Why, always Yeroshka! Who did the girls love? Always Yeroshka had to answer for it. Because I was a real *dzhigit*; a drinker; a thief (I used to seize herds of horses in the mountains); a singer; I could turn my hand to everything! There are no Cossacks like that nowadays. It makes me sick to look at them. When they're that high (Yeroshka held his hand three feet from the ground) they put on ridiculous boots and keep looking at them—that's all the pleasure they know. Or they'll fill themselves with drink, and they can't drink like men, but all wrong somehow. And who was I? I was Yeroshka the thief; they knew me in the villages, and in the mountains. Princes used to come to see me! They were my *kunaks*. I used to be everybody's *kunak*. If he was a Tartar—with a Tartar; an Armenian—with an Armenian; a soldier—with a soldier; an officer—with an officer! I didn't care, as long as he was a drinker. 'You must cleanse yourself of worldliness,' they say. 'You must not drink with soldiers, you must not eat with a Tartar.'"

"Who says that?" asked Olenin.

* The swords and daggers most highly valued in the Caucasus are called by the name of the maker—Gurda.—*Ed.*

"Why, our priests! But listen to a mullah or a Tartar cadi. He says: 'You unbelieving Giaours, why do you eat pork?' That shows that everyone has his own law. But I think it's all one. God has made everything for the joy of man. There is no sin in any of it. Take even an animal as an example. It lives in the Tartars' reeds, or in ours. Wherever it happens to go, there is its home! Whatever God gives it, that it eats! But our people say we shall have to lick the frying-pans in hell for that. And I think it is all a fraud," he added after a pause.

"What is a fraud?" asked Olenin.

"Why, what the preachers say. We had an army captain in Chervlenaya who was my *kunak*, a fine fellow, just like me. He was killed in Chechnya. Well, he used to say that the preachers invent all that out of their own heads. 'When you die the grass will grow on your grave, and that's all!' he used to say." The old man laughed. "He was a desperate fellow."

"How old are you?" asked Olenin.

"The Lord only knows! I must be about seventy. I was not so little when you had a tsaritsa on the throne. So you can reckon it out. I must be seventy, eh?"

"Yes, you must, but you are still a fine fellow."

"Well, thank Heaven, I am still sound, sound all through, except that a woman spoiled things for me, the witch. . . ."

"How was that?"

"Yes, spoiled it all for me."

"And so when you die the grass will grow on your grave?" repeated Olenin.

Yeroshka evidently did not wish to express his thought clearly. He was silent for a while. "And what did you think? Drink!" he shouted suddenly, smiling and handing Olenin some wine.

CHAPTER XV

"Well, where did I get to?" he continued, trying to remember. "Yes, that's the sort of man I am. I am a hunter. There is no hunter to equal me in the regiment. I will find and show you any animal, and any bird. What they do, where they go—I know it all! I have dogs, and two guns, and nets, and a screen, and a hawk. I have everything, thank the Lord! If you are a real sportsman, not just a braggart, I'll show you everything. Do you know what a man I am? As soon as I see a track—I know the animal. I know where he will lie down, and where he'll drink or wallow. I make myself a perch and sit there all night, watching. What's the good of staying at home! You only get into mischief, get yourself drunk. And then the women come and chatter, and the boys shout at me. It's enough to drive a man mad.

"It's a different matter to go out at dawn; you choose yourself a place, press down the reeds and sit there waiting, like the good fellow you are. You know everything that goes on in the woods. You look up at the sky: you watch the movement of the stars and they tell you what time it is. You look round—the wood is rustling; and you go on waiting and waiting till there's a crackle in the bushes, and you think—now a boar will come to wallow in the mud. The young eagles screech, and then the cocks crow in the village, or the geese cackle. When you hear the geese, that means it is not yet midnight. And I know all about such things! Or you hear a shot, somewhere far away, and that sets you thinking. Who was that firing? Was it another Cossack like yourself, who had been watching for some animal? And did he kill it? Or maybe he only wounded it, and now the poor creature limps through the reeds leaving a trail of blood, and all for nothing? I don't like that! Oh, how I dislike it! Why injure a beast? Fool, fool! Or else you think, 'Mebbe an

abrek has killed some foolish young Cossack.' Your mind is full of such thoughts. And once as I sat watching by the river, I saw a cradle floating down. There was nothing wrong with it, except for one corner which was broken off. Thoughts did come that time! Whose cradle might it be? I thought some of your soldiers, the devils, must have got into an *aul* and seized the Chechen women; and some devil killed the baby, took it by its legs, and smashed its head against a wall. Don't they do such things? Ah! Men have no souls! And thoughts came to me that filled me with pity. Yes, I thought, they've thrown away the cradle and driven the wife out, and burnt the house, but her man has taken his gun and come across to our side to rob us. Many are the thoughts that come to you while you sit there. And when you hear a litter breaking through the thicket, something begins to beat inside you. Come this way, my beauties! Then you think, 'They'll scent me,' and you sit and never stir, while your heart goes dun! dun! dun! enough to lift you in the air. Once this spring a fine litter came near me, I saw something black. 'In the name of the Father and of the Son,' I says, and I was just about to fire when the sow grunted to her pigs. 'Danger, children,' she says, 'there's a man here,' and off they all ran, breaking through the bushes. I felt I should like to get my teeth into her."

"How could a sow tell her brood that a man was there?" Olenin asked.

"Why shouldn't she? You think that animal's a fool? No, she's wiser than a man, though you do call her a pig! She knows everything. Take this, for instance. A man will pass along your track, and not notice it; but a pig, as soon as she gets on to your track, sniffs and runs away. That shows she's got some sense, doesn't it? You don't know your own smell, but she does. And there is this to be said too. You want to kill that pig, but she'd rather go about the woods alive. You have one law, and she has

another. She is a pig, but she's no worse than you—we're all God's creatures. Ah, dear! Man is foolish, foolish, foolish!" The old man repeated this several times, and then letting his head droop, he sat thinking.

Olenin also became thoughtful, and going down from the porch, with his hands behind his back, began pacing up and down the yard.

Yeroshka, rousing himself, raised his head and began gazing intently at the moths circling round the flickering flame of the candle and burning themselves in it.

"Fool, fool!" he said. "Where are you flying to? Fool, fool!" He rose and with his thick fingers began to drive the moths away.

"You'll burn, little fool! Fly this way, there's plenty of room." He spoke tenderly, trying to catch them with his thick fingers delicately by their wings, and then letting them fly again. "You are killing yourself, I'm sorry for you!"

He sat a long time chattering and sipping out of the bottle. Olenin paced up and down the yard. Suddenly he was struck by the sound of whispering outside the gate. Involuntarily holding his breath, he heard a woman's laughter, a man's voice, and the sound of a kiss. Intentionally rustling the grass under his feet, he crossed to the opposite side of the yard; but after a while the wattle fence creaked. A Cossack in a dark Circassian coat and a white sheepskin cap passed along the other side of the fence (it was Lukashka), and a tall woman with a white kerchief on her head went past Olenin. "Neither you nor I have anything to do with one another," Maryanka's firm step seemed to say. He followed her with his eyes to the porch of the house, and he even saw her, through the window, take off her kerchief and sit down. And suddenly a feeling of lonely depression, and vague longings and hopes, and envy of someone or other, overcame the young man's soul.

The last lights had been put out in the houses. The last sounds had died away. The wattle fences and the cattle gleaming white in the yards, the roofs of the houses and the stately poplars, all seemed to be sleeping the healthy peaceful sleep of toil. Only the incessant croaking of frogs in the damp distance reached the young man. In the east the stars were growing fewer and seemed to be melting in the increasing light; but overhead they were denser and deeper than before. The old man was dozing with his head on his hand. A cock crowed in the yard opposite, but Olenin still paced the yard, thinking of something. The sound of a song sung by several voices reached him, and he stepped up to the fence and listened. Several young Cossacks were singing merrily, and one voice rang out above them all.

"Do you know who is singing there?" said the old man, rousing himself. "It is the brave Lukashka. He has killed a Chechen, and now he rejoices. But what is there to rejoice at?... Fool, fool!"

"Have you ever killed people?" asked Olenin.

The old man suddenly raised himself on both elbows and brought his face close to Olenin's.

"You devil!" shouted the old man. "What are you asking? Don't speak of it. It is a serious thing to destroy a human being.... Ah, a very serious thing!... Well, good night, friend. I've had my fill of your food and drink," he said, rising. "Shall I come tomorrow, to go shooting?"

"Yes, do."

"Mind, get up early; if you oversleep you will be fined!"

"Never fear, I'll be up before you," answered Olenin.

The old man left. The song ceased, but one could hear footsteps and merry talk. A little later the singing broke out again, but farther away, and Yeroshka's loud voice was ringing, too.

"What people, what a life!" thought Olenin with a sigh, as he returned alone to his hut.

CHAPTER XVI

Uncle Yeroshka was no longer on active service and lived alone. Twenty years before, his wife had gone over to the Orthodox Church, deserted him and married a Russian sergeant-major, and he had no children. He was not bragging when he spoke of himself as having been the boldest daredevil in the village when he was young. Everybody in the regiment knew of his old-time prowess. The death of more than one Russian, as well as Chechen, lay on his conscience. He used to go plundering in the mountains, and robbed the Russians too; and he had twice been in prison. The greater part of his life was spent in the forests, hunting. There he lived for days on bread alone and drank nothing but water. But, on the other hand, when he was in the village he made merry from morning to night. After leaving Olenin he slept for a couple of hours and awoke before it was light. He lay on his bed thinking of the man he had become acquainted with the evening before. Olenin's simplicity (simplicity in the sense of not grudging him a drink) pleased him very much, and so did Olenin himself. He wondered why the Russians were all "simple" and so rich, and why they knew nothing and yet were educated. He pondered on these questions, and also considered what he might get out of Olenin.

Uncle Yeroshka's hut was of a good size and not old, but the absence of a woman was very noticeable in it. Contrary to the usual cleanliness of the Cossacks, the whole hut was filthy and exceedingly untidy. A blood-stained coat had been thrown on to the table; half a doughnut lay beside a plucked and mangled daw that he used for feeding the hawk. Sandals of raw hide, a gun, a dagger, a little bag, wet clothes and sundry rags lay scattered on the benches. In a corner stood a tub of stinking water, in which another pair of sandals were being steeped;

and near by was a gun and a hunting-screen. On the floor a net had been thrown down and several dead pheasants lay there, while a hen tied by its leg was walking about near the table pecking in the dirt. In the unheated stove stood a broken pot with some kind of milky liquid. On the top of the stove a falcon was screeching and trying to break the cord by which it was tied, and a moulting hawk sat quietly on the edge of the stove, looking askance at the hen and occasionally bowing its head to right and left.

Uncle Yeroshka, in his shirt, was lying prone on a short bed rigged up between the wall and the stove, with his strong legs raised and his feet on the stove. He was picking with his thick fingers at the scratches left on his hands by the hawk, which he was accustomed to carry without wearing gloves. The whole room, especially near the old man, was filled with that strong but not unpleasant mixture of smells that he always carried about him.

"*Uyde-ma*, Uncle?" (Is Uncle in?) through the window came a sharp voice, which he at once recognized as Lukashka's.

"*Uyde, uyde, uyde*! I am in!" shouted the old man. "Come in, neighbour Marka, Luka Marka. What can your uncle do for you? On your way to the cordon?"

The hawk, at the sound of his master's shout, flapped his wings and pulled at his cord.

The old man was fond of Lukashka, who was the only man he excepted from his general contempt for the younger generation of Cossacks. Besides which, Lukashka and his mother, as near neighbours, often gave the old man wine, clotted cream, and other home produce which Yeroshka did not possess. Uncle Yeroshka, who all his life had allowed himself to get carried away, always explained his infatuations from a practical point of view. "Well, why not? They can afford it," he used to say to himself. "I'll give them some fresh meat, or a bird, and they won't

forget their Uncle: they'll sometimes bring a cake or a piece of pie."

"Good morning, Marka! I am glad to see you," shouted the old man cheerfully, and quickly putting down his bare feet, he jumped off his bed and walked a step or two along the creaking floor, looked down at his out-turned toes, and suddenly, amused by the appearance of his feet, he smiled, stamped with his bare heel on the ground, stamped again, and then cut a caper.

"That was clever, eh?" he asked, his small eyes glistening.

Lukashka smiled faintly.

"Going back to the cordon?" asked the old man.

"I have brought the *chikhir* I promised you when we were at the cordon."

"May Christ save you!" said the old man, who took up the extremely wide trousers that were lying on the floor and his *beshmet*, put them on, fastened a strap round his waist, poured some water over his hands from an earthenware pot, wiped them on the old trousers, smoothed his beard with a bit of comb, and stopped in front of Lukashka. "Ready," he said.

Lukashka fetched a bowl, wiped it, and filled it with wine, and then handed it to the old man.

"Your health! To the Father and the Son!" said the old man, accepting the wine with solemnity. "May you have what you desire, may you always be a hero, and receive the cross."

Lukashka also drank a little, after repeating a prayer, and then put the wine on the table.

The old man rose and brought out some dried fish which he laid on the threshold, where he beat it with a stick to make it tender; then, having put it with his horny hands on a blue plate (his only one), he placed it on the table.

"I have all I want. I have victuals, thank God!" he said proudly. "Well, and what of Mosev?" he added.

Lukashka, evidently wishing to know the old man's opinion, told him how the corporal had taken the gun from him.

"Never mind the gun," said the old man. "If you don't give away the gun, you will get no reward."

"But they say, Uncle, it's little reward a fellow gets when he is not yet a mounted Cossack; and the gun is a fine one, worth eighty rubles."

"Eh, let it go! I had a dispute like that with an officer: he wanted my horse. 'Give it me and you'll be made a cornet,' says he. I wouldn't, and I got nothing!"

"Yes, Uncle, but you see I have to buy a horse; and they say you can't get one the other side of the river under fifty rubles, and mother has not yet sold our wine."

"Eh, we didn't bother," said the old man; "when Uncle Yeroshka was your age, he already stole herds of horses from the Nogai folk, and drove them across the Terek. Sometimes we'd give a fine horse for a quart of vodka or a cloak."

"Why so cheap?" asked Lukashka.

"You're a fool, a fool, Marka," said the old man contemptuously. "Why, that's what a man steals for, so as not to be stingy! As for you, I suppose you have never so much as seen how it's done? Why don't you speak?"

"What can I say, Uncle?" replied Lukashka. "It seems we are not the same breed as you were."

"You're a fool, Marka, a fool! Not the same breed!" retorted the old man, mimicking the Cossack lad. "I was not that sort of Cossack at your age."

"How's that?" asked Lukashka.

The old man shook his head contemptuously. "Uncle Yeroshka was *simple*; he did not grudge anything! That's why I was *kunak* with all Chechnya. A *kunak* would come to visit me, and I'd make him drunk with vodka and make

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him happy, and give him my bed to sleep in; and when I went to see him I'd take him a present! That's the way it is done, and not as you do nowadays. The only amusement you fellows have now is to crack seeds and spit out the shells!" the old man finished contemptuously, imitating the present-day Cossacks cracking sunflower seeds and spitting out the shells.

"Yes, I know," said Lukashka. "You are quite right."

"If you want to be a fellow of the right sort, be a *dzhigit*, and not a peasant! Even a peasant can buy a horse—he just pays his money and takes the horse."

They were silent for a while.

"Well, it's dull enough in the village and the cordon, Uncle; but there's nowhere one can go for a bit of sport. All our lads are so scared. Take Nazarka. The other day when we went to the *aul*, Girei Khan asked us to come to Nogai for some horses, but no one went; and how could I go alone?"

"What about your uncle? Do you think I am quite dried up?... Well, I'm not. Let me have a horse, and I'll be off to Nogai at once."

"What's the good of talking nonsense!" said Lukashka. "You'd better tell me what to do about Girei Khan. He says, 'Just bring the horses to the Terek, and then even if you bring a whole herd, I'll find a place for them.' He's a Chechen, too, you know, you can't be sure of him."

"You may trust Girei Khan, all his kin were good people. His father was a faithful *kunak* of mine. But listen to your uncle, he won't teach you wrong. Make Girei Khan take an oath, then it will be all right. And if you go with him, have your pistol ready all the same; especially when it comes to dividing up the horses. I was nearly killed that way once by a Chechen. I wanted ten rubles from him for a horse. Trusting is all right, but don't go to sleep without a gun."

Lukashka listened attentively to the old man.

"I say, Uncle, have you any stone-break grass?" he asked after a pause.

"I have none, but I'll teach you how to get it. You're a good lad, and don't forget an old man.... Shall I tell you?"

"Tell me, Uncle."

"You know the tortoise? She's a devil, the tortoise is!"

"Of course I do!"

"Find her nest and fence it round, so that she can't get in. Well, she'll come, and she'll go round it, and then she'll go off to find the stone-break grass. And soon she will bring some along and break through the fence. Mind you go there next morning in good time, and where the fence is broken, there you'll find the stone-break grass lying. Take it wherever you like. No lock and no bar will be able to stop you."

"Have you tried it yourself, Uncle?"

"As for trying, I have not tried it, but I was told of it by good people. I used only one charm. That was to repeat the 'All hail!' when mounting my horse; and no one ever killed me!"

"What is the 'All hail!,' Uncle?"

"What, don't you know it? What a lot you are! You're right to ask your Uncle. Listen, and repeat after me:

"Hail! Ye, living in Zion,
Behold your King.
We mount our horses,
Sophonia weepeth.
Zacharias speaketh,
Father Mandrych,
Mankind ever loving.

"Mankind ever loving," the old man repeated. "Do you know it now? Try it."

Lukashka laughed.

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Lukashka laughed.

"Go on, Uncle, was that why they never killed you? Maybe it just happened so!"

"You're getting too clever! Learn it off by heart, and say it. It will do you no harm. Just sing the 'All hail!' and you'll be all right." And the old man himself began laughing. "You'd better not go to Nogai, Luka!"

"Why not?"

"Times have changed. You are not the same men. You are regular muckers, you Cossacks, nowadays! And see how many Russians have come down on us! They'll bring you to court. Come on, give it up! You're not the man for it! Now Girchik and me, we used. . . ." And the old man was about to begin one of his unending tales, but Lukashka glanced at the window and interrupted him:

"It's broad daylight, Uncle. I must be off. Come and see us one day."

"Christ be with you! I'm going to the army man; I promised to take him out shooting. He seems a good fellow."

CHAPTER XVII

From Yeroshka's hut Lukashka went home. Dewy mists were rising from the ground and enveloping the village. Though the cattle were out of sight, they could be heard on all sides beginning to stir. The cocks called to one another with increasing frequency and insistence. It was growing lighter and the people of the village were getting up. Not till he was quite close, could Lukashka make out the fence of his yard, all wet with dew, the porch of the hut and the open shed. From the misty yard he heard the sound of an axe chopping wood. Lukashka entered the hut. His mother was up, and stood at the stove, throwing wood into it. His little sister was still lying in bed asleep.

"Well, Lukashka, had enough holiday-making?" his mother asked quietly. "Where did you spend the night?"

"I was in the village," her son replied reluctantly, reaching for his musket, which he drew from its case and examined carefully.

His mother shook her head.

Lukashka poured a little gunpowder on to the pan, took out a pouch from which he drew some empty cartridge-cases and began filling them, carefully plugging each one with a bullet wrapped in a rag. Then, having tested the loaded cartridges with his teeth and examined them, he put the pouch away.

"Mother, I told you my bags wanted mending; has it been done?" he asked.

"Oh yes, our dumb girl was mending something last night. Why, is it time for you to be going back to the cordon? I haven't seen anything of you."

"Yes, as soon as I am ready I shall have to go," answered Lukashka, tying up the gunpowder. "And where is our dumb one? Outside?"

"Chopping wood, I expect. She kept fretting for you. 'I shall not see him at all!' she told me. She puts her hand to her face like this, and clicks her tongue, and presses her hands to her heart, as much as to say, 'I wish I could see him.' Shall I call her in? She understood all about the *abrek*."

"Call her," said Lukashka. "And I had some tallow there; bring it: I must grease my sword."

The old woman went out, and a few minutes later Lukashka's deaf and dumb sister came up the creaking steps and entered the hut. She was six years older than her brother, and would have been extremely like him, had it not been for the dull yet coarsely changeable expression (common to all deaf and dumb people) of her face.

She wore a coarse smock all patched; her feet were bare and muddy, and on her head she had an old blue kerchief. Her neck, arms, and face were sinewy as a

man's. Her clothing and her whole appearance indicated that she was accustomed to hard male labour.

She brought in an armful of logs, which she threw down by the stove. Then she went up to her brother, and with a joyful smile which made her whole face pucker up, touched him on the shoulder and began making rapid signs to him with her hands, her face, and whole body.

"That's right, that's right, good girl Stepka!" answered the brother, nodding. "You've fetched everything, and mended everything, you're a good girl! Here, take this for it!" He brought out two pieces of gingerbread from his pocket and gave them to her.

The dumb woman's face flushed with pleasure, and she began making weird exclamations of joy. Seizing the gingerbread, she began to gesticulate still more rapidly, frequently pointing in one direction and passing her thick finger over her eyebrows and her face. Lukashka understood her, and kept nodding with a faint smile on his lips. She was telling him to give the girls dainties, and that the girls liked him, and that one girl, Maryanka —the best of them all—loved him. She indicated Maryanka by rapidly pointing in the direction of Maryanka's home and to her own eyebrows and face, and by smacking her lips and shaking her head. "She loves you," she expressed by pressing her hand to her breast, kissing it, and pretending to embrace someone. Their mother returned to the hut, and seeing what her dumb daughter was saying, smiled and shook her head. Her daughter showed her the gingerbread, and again made the noise which expressed joy.

"I told Ulitka the other day that I'd send a matchmaker to them," said the mother. "She took my words well."

Lukashka looked silently at his mother. "But how about selling the wine, Mother? I need a horse."

"I'll cart it when the time comes. I must get the barrels ready," said the mother, evidently not wishing her son to meddle in domestic matters. "When you go out, you'll find a bag in the passage. I borrowed it from the neighbours, and got something for you to take back to the cordon; or shall I put it in your saddle-bag?"

"All right," answered Lukashka. "And if Girei Khan should come across the river, send him to me at the cordon. I shall not get leave again for a long time now; I have some business with him."

He began to get ready to start.

"I will send him on," said the old woman. "You have been spreeing at Yamka's all the time, haven't you? I went out in the night to see to the cattle, and I think it was your voice I heard singing songs."

Lukashka did not reply, but went out into the passage, threw his bags over his shoulder, tucked up the skirts of his coat, took his musket, and then stopped for a moment on the threshold.

"Good-bye, Mother!" he said as he closed the gate behind him. "Send me a small barrel with Nazarka. I promised it to the lads, and he'll call for it."

"May Christ keep you, Lukashka. God be with you! I'll send you some, some from the new barrel," said the old woman, going to the fence. "But listen," she added, leaning over the fence.

The Cossack stopped.

"You've been making merry here; well, that's all right. Why shouldn't a young man have a good time? God has sent you luck, and that's good. But now look out and mind, my son. Don't you go and get into mischief. Above all, honour your superiors. You must do that. And I will sell the wine and find money for a horse, and will arrange a match with the girl for you."

"All right, all right!" answered her son, frowning.

His dumb sister made a sound to attract his attention. She pointed to her head and the palm of her hand, to indicate the shaved head of a Chechen. Then she frowned, and pretending to aim with a gun, she shrieked and began rapidly humming and shaking her head. This meant that Lukashka should kill another Chechen.

Lukashka understood. He smiled, and holding the gun at his back under his cloak, strode lightly and rapidly into the thick mist.

Silently the old woman, having stood a little while at the gate, returned to the hut and immediately set to work.

CHAPTER XVIII

At the same time as Lukashka set off for the cordon, Uncle Yeroshka whistled to his dogs, climbed over the fence, and went by back lanes to Olenin's lodging; he disliked meeting women before going out hunting or shooting.

Olenin was still asleep, and even Vanyusha, though awake, was still in bed and was looking round the room, considering whether it was not time to get up, when Uncle Yeroshka, gun on shoulder and in full hunter's trappings, opened the door. "A cudgel!" he shouted in his deep voice. "An alarm! The Chechens are upon us! Ivan! Get the samovar ready for your master; and get up yourself—look sharp!" cried the old man. "That's our way, my good man! Why, even the girls are up! Look out of the window. See, she's going for water, and you're still abed!"

Olenin awoke and jumped up, feeling fresh and light-hearted at the sight of the old man and at the sound of his voice. "Quick, Vanyusha, quick!" he cried.

"Is that the way you go hunting?" said the old man. "Others are having their breakfast, and you are still asleep! Lyam! Here!" he called to his dog.

"Is your gun ready?" he shouted, as loud as if a whole crowd were in the hut.

"Well, I admit I'm in the wrong, but it can't be helped! The powder, Vanyusha, and the wads!" said Olenin.

"A fine!" shouted the old man.

"*Du thé voulez-vous?*" asked Vanyusha, grinning.

"You're not one of us, your gabble is not like our speech, you devil!" the old man shouted at Vanyusha, showing the stumps of his teeth.

"A first offence must be forgiven," said Olenin gaily, drawing on his high boots.

"The first offence shall be forgiven," answered Yeroshka, "but if you oversleep another time you'll be fined a pail of *chikhir*. When it gets warmer, you'll not find any deer."

"And even if we do find him, he is wiser than we are," said Olenin, repeating the words spoken by the old man the evening before, "and you can't deceive him!"

"Yes, laugh away! You kill one first, and then you may talk. Now then, hurry up! Look, there's the master himself coming to see you," added Yeroshka, looking out of the window. "Just see how he's got himself up. He's put on a new coat to show you he is an officer. Ah, these people, these people!" And, sure enough, Vanyusha came in and announced that the master of the house wished to see Olenin.

"*L'argent!*" he remarked profoundly, to forewarn his master of the meaning of this visitation. Following him, the master of the house, in a new Circassian coat with an officer's stripes on the shoulders and with well-polished boots (quite exceptional among Cossacks), entered the room, swaying from side to side and welcoming his lodger on his arrival.

The cornet, Ilya Vasilyevich, was an *educated* Cossack. He had been to Russia proper, was a school-teacher, and above all, he was *noble*. He wished to appear *noble*, but

one could not help feeling that beneath his grotesque pretence of polish, his affectation, his self-confidence, and his absurd way of speaking, he was just the same as Uncle Yeroshka. This was also plain to see from his sunburnt face and his hands and his red nose. Olenin asked him to sit down.

"Good morning, Father Ilya Vasilyevich," said Yeroshka, making what seemed to Olenin an ironically low bow.

"Good morning, Uncle. So you're here already," said the cornet with a careless nod.

The cornet was a man of about forty, with a grey pointed beard, dry and lean, but still handsome and very fresh-looking for his age. Having come to see Olenin, he was evidently afraid of being taken for an ordinary Cossack, and wanted to let Olenin feel his importance from the first.

"This is our *Egyptian Nimrod*," he remarked, addressing Olenin, and pointing to the old man with a self-satisfied smile. "*A mighty hunter before the Lord*! He is our foremost man in everything. You have already been pleased to become acquainted with him, I see."

Uncle Yeroshka gazed at his feet, in their sandals of wet raw hide, and shook his head thoughtfully at the cornet's ability and learning, and muttered to himself: "*Gyptian Nimrod*! The things he thinks of!"

"Yes, we mean to go hunting," answered Olenin.

"I see, sir, exactly," said the cornet, "but I have a small matter of business to discuss with you."

"What can I do for you?"

"Seeing that you are a gentleman," began the cornet, "and as I may understand myself to be in the rank of an officer too, and therefore we may always progressively negotiate, as gentlemen do...." (He stopped and looked with a smile at Olenin and at the old man.) "But if you have the desire with my consent, then, as my wife is a foolish woman of our class, she could not quite compre-

hend your words of yesterday's date. Therefore my quarters might be let for six rubles to the Regimental Adjutant, without the stables; but I can always avert it from myself free of charge. But, as you desire, therefore I, being myself of an officer's rank, can come to an agreement with you in everything, personally, as an inhabitant of this district, not according to our customs, but can maintain the conditions in every way...."

"Speaks clearly!" muttered the old man.

The cornet continued in the same strain for a long time. At last, not without difficulty, Olenin gathered that the cornet wished to let his rooms to him, Olenin, for six rubles a month. The latter gladly agreed to this, and offered his visitor a glass of tea. The cornet declined.

"According to our foolish custom we consider it something of a sin to drink from a *worldly* tumbler," he said. "Though, of course, with my education I may understand, but my wife from her human weakness...."

"Well then, will you have some tea?"

"If you will permit me, I will bring my own *particular* glass," answered the cornet, and stepped out into the porch.

"Bring me my glass!" he cried.

In a few minutes the door opened, and a young sunburnt arm in a pink sleeve thrust in a tumbler. The cornet went up, took it, and whispered something to his daughter. Olenin poured tea for the cornet into the latter's own *particular* glass, and for Yeroshka into a *worldly* glass.

"However, I do not desire to detain you," said the cornet, scalding his lips and emptying his tumbler. "I, too, have a great liking for fishing, and I am here, so to say, only on leave of absence for recreation from my duties. I, too, have the desire to tempt fortune and see whether some *gifts of the Terek* may not fall to my share. I hope you, too, will come and see us and drink of our

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"Why are you so angry with him?" asked Olenin.

"He's mean. I don't like it," answered the old man. "He'll leave it all behind when he dies! Then who's he saving up for? He's built two houses, and he's got a second orchard from his brother by a lawsuit. And over this business of papers what a dog he is! Folk come to him from other villages to ask him to fill up their papers. And things turn out just as he writes. He does it just so. But who is he saving for? He's only got one boy and the girl; when she is married who'll be left?"

"Well then, he's saving up for her dowry," said Olenin.

"What dowry? The girl is sought after, she's a fine girl. But he's such a devil that he must needs marry her to a rich fellow. He wants to get a big price for her. There's Luka, a Cossack, a neighbour and a nephew of mine, a fine lad. He is the one who killed the Chechen—he has been wooing her for a long time, but he won't let him have her. He's given one excuse, and another, and a third. 'The girl's too young,' he says. But I know what he is thinking. He wants to keep them bowing and scraping to him. Still they will get her for Lukashka, because he is the best Cossack in the village, a *dzhigit*, who has killed an *abrek*, and he will be awarded a cross."

"But how about this? When I was walking in the yard last night, I saw my landlord's daughter and a Cossack kissing together," said Olenin.

"I don't believe you!" cried the old man, stopping.

"On my word," said Olenin.

"She is a devil of a woman," said Yeroshka, and lapsed into deep thought. "But what Cossack was it?"

"I couldn't see."

"Well, what sort of a cap had he, a white one?"

"Yes."

"And a red coat? About your height?"

"No, a bit taller."

wine, according to the custom of our village." The cornet then bowed, shook hands with Olenin, and went out. While Olenin was getting ready, he heard the cornet giving orders to his family in an authoritative and sensible tone, and a few minutes later he saw him pass by the window in a tattered coat, with his trousers rolled up to his knees, and a fishing-net over his shoulder.

"A rascal!" said Uncle Yeroshka, emptying his *worldly* tumbler. "And will you really pay him six rubles? Was such a thing ever heard of? You could have the best hut in the village for two rubles. The scoundrel! Why, I'd let you have mine for three!"

"No, I'll stay here," said Olenin.

"Six rubles! . . . It's just throwing money away." The old man sighed. "Let's have some *chikhir*, Ivan!"

After a snack and a glass of vodka to prepare themselves for the road, Olenin and the old man went out together before eight o'clock. At the gate they met an oxcart. A white kerchief tied round her head nearly to her eyes, a coat over her smock, and wearing high boots, Maryanka, with a long switch in her hand, was dragging the oxen by a rope tied to their horns.

"What a beauty!" said the old man, pretending that he was going to seize her.

Maryanka flourished her switch at him, and glanced merrily at them both with her handsome eyes.

Olenin felt still more light-hearted.

"Now then, come on, come on," he said, throwing his gun on his shoulder and conscious of the girl's eyes upon him.

Maryanka's voice addressing the oxen rang out behind them, and was followed by the creak of the moving cart.

While their road lay through the pastures at the back of the village, Yeroshka went on talking. He could not forget the cornet, and kept on abusing him.

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"He's mean. I don't like it," answered the old man. "He'll leave it all behind when he dies! Then who's he saving up for? He's built two houses, and he's got a second orchard from his brother by a lawsuit. And over this business of papers what a dog he is! Folk come to him from other villages to ask him to fill up their papers. And things turn out just as he writes. He does it just so. But who is he saving for? He's only got one boy and the girl; when she is married who'll be left?"

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"Well, what sort of a cap had he, a white one?"

"Yes."

"And a red coat? About your height?"

"No, a bit taller."

"Why, it was him!" And Yeroshka burst out laughing. "It was Marka himself. He is Luka, but I call him Marka for a joke. Luka himself! I love him. I was just the same myself. What's the good of minding them? My sweetheart used to sleep with her mother and her sister-in-law, but I managed to get in. She used to sleep upstairs; that witch her mother was a regular demon. How she hated me! Well, I used to come with my friend, Girchik his name was. We'd come under her window, and I'd climb on his shoulders, push up the window and begin groping about. She used to sleep just there on a bench. Once I woke her up and she nearly called out. She had not recognized me. 'Who's that?' she said, and I could not answer. Her mother was even beginning to stir, but I took off my cap and shoved it over her mouth; and she knew it at once, because it was torn, and ran out to me. I got everything I wanted in those days. She'd bring along clotted cream and grapes and everything," Yeroshka added in his practical fashion. "And she was not the only one. That was the life!"

"And what now?"

"Now we'll follow the dog, get a pheasant to settle on a tree, and then you can shoot."

"Why don't you have a try for Maryanka?"

"Watch the dogs. I'll show you tonight," said the old man, pointing to his favourite dog, Lyam.

After a pause they resumed their conversation for about a hundred paces. Then the old man stopped again and pointed to a twig that lay across the path.

"What do you think of that?" he said. "You think it's nothing? That stick shouldn't be lying so. It's bad."

"Why is it bad?"

The old man smiled scornfully.

"Ah, you don't know anything. Just listen to me. When a stick lies like that, don't you step across it. You must

go round it, or throw it off the path like this, and say 'Father, Son and Holy Ghost,' and then go on with God's blessing. Nothing will happen to you. That's what the old men used to teach me."

"Come, what rubbish!" said Olenin. "You'd better tell me more about Maryanka. Does she carry on with Lukashka?"

"Hush ... be quiet now!" the old man again interrupted in a whisper. "Only listen. We'll go round by the wood."

And the old man, stepping quietly in his soft shoes, led the way by a narrow path into the dense, wild undergrowth of the forest. Now and again with a frown he turned to look at Olenin, who rustled and clattered with his heavy boots and, carrying his gun carelessly, several times caught the twigs of the trees that grew across the path.

"Don't make such a noise. Step softly, soldier!" the old man whispered angrily.

There was a feeling in the air that the sun had risen. The mist was dissolving, but it still enveloped the tops of the trees. The forest seemed overpoweringly tall. At every step the view changed. What had appeared to be a tree proved to be a bush, and a reed looked like a tree.

CHAPTER XIX

It was calm. The sounds from the village, audible at first, no longer reached the hunters. Only the brambles crackled as the dogs ran under them, and now and then birds called to one another. Olenin knew that danger lurked in the forest, that *abreks* always hid in such places. But he knew, too, that, for a man on foot, a gun is a great protection in the forest. Not that he was afraid, but he felt that another man in his place might be; and looking into the damp misty forest and listening to the rare

and faint sounds with strained attention, he shifted his grip on his gun and experienced a pleasant feeling that was new to him. Uncle Yeroshka went in front, stopping and carefully scanning every puddle where an animal had left a double track, and pointing it out to Olenin. He hardly spoke at all, and only occasionally passed remarks in a whisper. The track they were following had once been made by carts, but grass had long since covered the ruts. The elm- and plane-tree forest, on both sides of them, was so dense and overgrown with creepers that it was impossible to see anything through it. Nearly every tree was twined from top to bottom with wild grape-vines, and dark brambles spread thickly over the ground. Every little glade was overgrown with blackberry bushes and grey feathery reeds. In places large hoofprints and small funnel-shaped pheasant trails led from the path into the thicket. The vigorous growth of this forest, where no cattle ever roamed, struck Olenin at every turn, for he had never seen anything like it. The forest, the danger, the old man and his mysterious whispering, Maryanka with her virile upright bearing, and the mountains—it all seemed to him like a dream.

"A pheasant has settled," whispered the old man, looking round and pulling his cap over his face. "Cover your mug! A pheasant!" He made an angry gesture at Olenin and crept forward almost on all fours. "He don't like a man's mug."

Olenin was still behind him when the old man stopped and began examining a tree. A cock pheasant on the tree clucked at the dog that was barking at it, and Olenin saw the bird; but at that moment a report, as of a cannon, came from Yeroshka's enormous gun; the bird fluttered up and, losing some feathers, fell to the ground. As he walked up to the old man, Olenin disturbed another. Lifting his gun, he aimed and fired. The pheasant

went on soaring for a moment and then, catching on the branches as it fell, dropped to the ground.

"Good lad!" the old man, who could not hit a bird on the wing, shouted, laughing.

They picked up the pheasants and went on. Olenin, excited by the exercise and the praise, kept addressing remarks to the old man.

"Stop! Come this way," Yeroshka interrupted. "I noticed the track of deer here, yesterday."

After they had turned into the thicket and gone some three hundred paces, they scrambled into a glade overgrown with reeds and partly under water. Olenin failed to keep up with the old hunter, and presently Uncle Yeroshka, some twenty paces in front, stopped down, nodding and beckoning with his arm. On coming up with him, Olenin saw that Yeroshka was pointing to a man's footprint.

"D'you see?"

"Well?" said Olenin, trying to speak as calmly as he could. "A man's footprint."

Involuntarily the thought of Cooper's *Pathfinder* and of *abreks* flashed through Olenin's mind, but noticing the mysterious manner with which the old man moved on, he hesitated to question him, and remained in doubt whether this mysteriousness was caused by fear of danger, or by the sport.

"No, it's my own footprint," the old man replied simply, and pointed to the grass, where the track of an animal was just visible.

The old man went on, and Olenin kept up with him. Descending to lower ground some twenty paces farther on, they came upon a spreading pear-tree, under which, on the black earth, lay the fresh dung of some animal. The spot, all covered over with wild vines, was like a snug arbour, dark and cool.

"He's been here this morning," said the old man with a sigh; "the lair is still damp; quite fresh."

Suddenly they heard a terrible crash in the forest some ten paces from where they stood. They both started and seized their guns, but they could see nothing and only heard the branches breaking. The rapid rhythmical thud of galloping was heard for a moment and then changed into a hollow rumble which resounded farther and farther off, re-echoing in wider and wider circles through the forest. Olenin felt as though something had snapped in his heart. He peered vainly into the green thicket, and then turned to the old man. Uncle Yeroshka, with his gun still at his shoulder, stood motionless; his cap was thrust back, his eyes gleamed with unusual brightness, and his mouth with the worn yellow teeth bared angrily, seemed to have stiffened in that position.

"An antlered stag!" he muttered, and throwing down his gun in despair he began pulling at his grey beard. "It was standing right here. We should have come round by the path.... Fool! Fool!" And he gave his beard an angry tug. "Fool! Pig!" he repeated, wrenching painfully at his own beard.

Something seemed to fly through the mist over the forest, and the noise of the fleeing stag echoed farther and farther away in the distance.

It was already dusk when, hungry, tired, but full of vigour, Olenin returned with the old man. Dinner was ready. He ate and drank with the old man till he felt warm and merry. Then he went out into the porch. Again the mountains rose before him in the sunset. Again the old man told his endless stories of hunting, of *abreks*, of sweethearts, of a wild, adventurous and reckless life. Again Maryanka went in and out and across the yard, and her smock outlined the powerful virgin beauty of her figure.

CHAPTER XX

The next day, Olenin went alone to the spot where he and the old man had startled the stag. Instead of passing round through the gate, he climbed over the prickly hedge, as everybody else did, and before he had had time to pull out the thorns that had caught in his coat, his dog, which had run on in front, roused two pheasants. He had hardly reached the briers, when the pheasants began to rise at every step. (The old man had not shown him that place the day before, intending to keep it for shooting from behind his screen.) Olenin fired twelve times, and killed five pheasants, but clambering after them through the briers made him so tired that he was soon drenched with perspiration. He called off his dog, uncocked his gun, put in some bullets above the small shot, and, brushing away the mosquitoes with the wide sleeve of his Circassian coat, made his way slowly to the spot where they had been the day before. It was, however, impossible to keep back the dog, who found trails even on the path itself, and Olenin killed two more pheasants, so that it was getting towards noon by the time he had retrieved them and approached the place he was looking for.

The day was perfectly clear, calm, and very hot. The morning moisture had dried up even in the forest, and myriads of mosquitoes literally covered his face, his back, and his arms. His dog had turned from black to grey, its back being covered with mosquitoes, and so had Olenin's coat, through which the insects thrust their stings. Olenin was ready to run away from them, and he began to feel it would be impossible to live in this village in the summer. He was about to go home, but remembering that other people managed to endure such pain, he resolved to bear it and gave himself up to be devoured. And, strange to say, by noontime the feeling

actually became pleasant. He even felt that without this mosquito-filled atmosphere around him, and this mosquito-paste mingled with perspiration which his hand smeared over his face, and this unceasing irritation all over his body, the forest would lose for him some of its character and charm. These myriads of insects were so well suited to the wild, monstrously lavish vegetation, to these multitudes of birds and beasts which filled the forest, to this dark foliage, to this humid scented air, to these runlets filled with turbid water which everywhere soaked through from the Terek, gurgling under the overhanging leaves, that the very thing which had at first seemed to him dreadful and intolerable, now seemed agreeable. After going round the place where yesterday they had encountered the stag, and not finding anything, he felt inclined to rest. The sun hung right above the forest and poured its perpendicular rays down on his back and head whenever he came out into a glade, or on to the road. The seven heavy pheasants dragged painfully at his waist. Having found the tracks of the stag, he crept under a bush into the thicket just where the stag had lain, and lay down in its lair. He examined the dark foliage around him, the place marked by the stag's perspiration, the dried dung, the imprint of the stag's knees, the bit of black earth it had kicked up, and his own footprints of the day before. He felt cool and comfortable and had no thoughts or desires. And suddenly he was overcome by such a strange feeling of causeless joy, and of love for everything, that, from an old habit of his childhood, he began crossing himself and giving thanks to someone. Suddenly, with unusual clarity, he thought: "Here am I, Dmitry Olenin, a being so distinct from every other being, now lying all alone, Heaven only knows where—where a stag used to live—a handsome old fellow, who perhaps had never seen the face of man, and in a place where no human being has ever sat, or thought

these thoughts. Here I sit, and around me stand old and young trees, one of them festooned with wild grape-vines, and the pheasants are fluttering, driving one another about and perhaps scenting their murdered brothers." He felt his pheasants, examined them, and wiped the warm blood off his hand on to his coat. "Perhaps the jackals scent them, too, and with dissatisfied faces go off in another direction; above me, flying among the leaves, which to them seem enormous islands, mosquitoes hang in the air and buzz; one, two, three, four, a hundred, a thousand, a million mosquitoes, and all of them buzz something or other, and each one of them is a Dmitry Olenin, just as distinct from all the others as I am myself." He imagined vividly what the mosquitoes buzzed: "This way, this way, lads! Here's someone we can eat!" They buzzed, and stuck to him. And it came to him clearly that he was not a Russian nobleman, a member of Moscow society, the friend and relation of so-and-so and so-and-so, but just such a mosquito, or pheasant, or deer, as those that were now living all round him. "Just as they, just as Uncle Yeroshka, I shall live awhile and die, and as he says truly, grass will grow and nothing more."

"But what though the grass does grow?" he continued thinking. "Still I must live, and be happy, because happiness is all I desire. Never mind what I am—an animal like all the rest, above whom the grass will grow, and nothing more; or a frame in which a bit of the one God has been set—still I must live in the very best way. How then must I live to be happy, and why was I not happy before?" And he began to recall his former life, and he felt disgusted with himself. He appeared to himself to have been terribly demanding and selfish, though he now saw that all the while he had really needed nothing for himself. And he kept looking round at the foliage with

the light shining through it, at the setting sun and the clear sky, and he felt just as happy as before.

"Why am I happy now and what used I to live for?" he thought. "How much I demanded for myself; how I schemed and yet never achieved anything for myself but shame and sorrow! And now I require nothing to be happy." And suddenly a new light seemed to reveal itself to him. "Happiness is this!" he said to himself. "Happiness lies in living for others. That is evident. The desire for happiness is innate in every man; therefore it is legitimate. When trying to satisfy it selfishly—that is, by seeking for oneself riches, fame, comforts, or love—it may happen that circumstances arise which make it impossible to satisfy these desires. It follows that it is these desires that are illegitimate, but not the need for happiness. But what desires can always be satisfied, despite external circumstances? What are they? Love, self-denial." He was so glad and excited when he had discovered this, as it seemed to him, new truth, that he jumped up and began impatiently seeking someone to sacrifice himself for, to do good to, and to love. "Since one wants nothing for oneself," he kept thinking, "why not live for others?"

He took up his gun with the intention of returning home quickly to think this out and to find an opportunity of doing good. He made his way out of the thicket.

When he had come out into the glade he looked around him; the sun was no longer visible above the tree-tops. It had grown cooler, and the place seemed to him quite strange, and not like the country round the village. Everything seemed changed—the weather and the character of the forest; the sky was wrapped in clouds, the wind was rustling in the tree-tops, and all around nothing was visible but reeds and decaying broken trees. He called to his dog, who had run away to follow some animal, and his voice came back as in a desert. And suddenly he

was seized with a terrible sense of dread. He grew frightened. He remembered the *abreks*, and the murders he had been told about, and he expected every moment that an *abrek* would spring at him from behind a bush, and he would have to defend his life and die, or be a coward. He thought of God and of the after life as he had not thought about them for a long time. And all around was Nature, gloomy, stern and wild. "And is it worth while living for oneself," he thought, "when at any moment you may die, and die without having done any good; and in such a way that no one will know of it?" He went in the direction where he fancied the village lay. Of his shooting he had no further thought; he felt tired out, and peered round at every bush and tree with particular attention and almost with terror, every moment expecting to be called to account for his life. After wandering about for a considerable time, he came upon a ditch with cold sandy water from the Terek flowing in it, and, not to go astray any longer, he decided to follow it. He went on, without knowing where the ditch would lead him. Suddenly the reeds behind him crackled. He shuddered and seized his gun. The next moment he was overwhelmed with shame. The over-excited dog, panting hard, had thrown itself into the cold water of the ditch and was lapping it.

He, too, had a drink, and then followed the dog in the direction it wished to go, thinking it would lead him to the village. But despite the dog's company, everything around him seemed still more foreboding. The forest grew darker, and the wind blew stronger and stronger in the tops of the broken old trees. Great birds circled, screeching, round their nests in those trees. The vegetation became poorer, and more and more often he came upon rustling reeds and bare sandy spaces, covered with the spoor of animals. To the howling of the wind was added another cheerless monotonous roar. He began to

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feel utterly downcast. Putting his hand behind him he felt his pheasants, and found one missing. It had broken off and was lost, and only the bleeding neck and head remained sticking in his belt. He felt more frightened than he had ever been before. He began to pray to God, and feared above all that he might die without having done anything good or kind; and he so much wanted to live, to live in order to perform a great feat of self-sacrifice.

CHAPTER XXI

Suddenly it was as though the sun had shone into his soul. He heard Russian being spoken, and the rapid smooth flow of the Terek, and a few steps farther in front of him he saw the brown moving surface of the river and the drab wet sand of its banks and shallows, the distant steppe, the cordon watch-tower outlined above the water, a saddled, hobbled horse among the brambles, and then the mountains opening out before him. The red sun appeared for an instant from under a cloud, and its last rays glittered brightly along the river, over the reeds, on the watch-tower and on a group of Cossacks, and the vigorous figure of Lukashka caught his eye.

Olenin felt that he was again, without any apparent cause, perfectly happy. He had come upon the Nizhne-Prototsky post on the Terek, opposite a peaceful *aul* on the other bank of the river. He accosted the Cossacks, but not finding as yet any excuse for doing anyone a kindness he entered the hut; nor in the hut did he find any such opportunity. The Cossacks received him coldly. On entering the mud hut he lit a cigarette. The Cossacks paid little attention to him, first because he was smoking a cigarette, and secondly because they had something else to divert them that evening. Some hostile Chechens, relatives of the *abrek* who had been killed, had come from the hills with a scout to ransom the body; and the

Cossacks were waiting for their commanding officer to arrive from the village. The dead man's brother, tall and of fine physique, with a short-cropped beard which was dyed red, in spite of the ragged coat and cap he wore, was calm and majestic as a king. His face was very much like that of the dead *abrek*. He did not deign to look at anyone and never once glanced at the dead body, but, sitting on his heels in the shade, he spat as he smoked his short pipe, and occasionally uttered a few guttural sounds of command, which were respectfully obeyed by his companion. He was evidently a *dzhigit* who had met Russians more than once before under very different circumstances, and nothing about them could astonish or even interest him. Olenin went up to the body and was glancing at it, when the brother, looking past him with calm contempt, said something sharply and angrily. The scout hastened to cover the dead man's face with his coat. Olenin was struck by the dignified and stern expression of the *dzhigit*'s face. He began to speak to him, asking from what village he came, but the Chechen, scarcely giving him a glance, spat contemptuously and turned away. Olenin was so surprised at the Chechen not being interested in him that he could only put it down to the man's stupidity or ignorance of Russian; so he turned to the scout who also acted as interpreter. The scout was as ragged as the other, but instead of being red-haired he was black-haired, fidgety, with extremely white gleaming teeth and sparkling black eyes. The scout willingly entered into conversation, and asked for a cigarette.

"There were five brothers," began the scout in his broken Russian. "This is the third brother that the Russians have killed, only two are left. He is a *dzhigit*, great *dzhigit*!" he said, pointing to the Chechen. "When they killed Ahmet Khan, the one who is dead, this one was sitting on the opposite bank among the reeds. He

saw it all. Saw him laid in the boat and brought to the bank. He sat there till the night and wished to kill the old man, but the others would not let him."

Lukashka went up to the speaker, and sat down.

"What *aul* are you from?" he asked.

"From there in the hills," replied the scout, pointing to the misty bluish gorge beyond the Terek. "Do you know Suyuk-su? It is about eight miles beyond that."

"Do you know Girei Khan in Suyuk-su?" Lukashka asked, evidently proud of the acquaintance. "He is my *kunak.*"

"He is my neighbour," answered the scout.

"He's a good fellow!" And Lukashka, evidently much interested, began talking in Tartar to the scout.

Presently a Cossack lieutenant and the head of the village arrived on horseback, with a suite of two Cossacks. The captain—a recently commissioned Cossack officer—greeted the Cossacks with a "Good health," but none shouted in reply, "Good health, your honour," as is customary in the Russian Army, and only a few replied with a bow. Some, and among them Lukashka, rose and stood to attention. The corporal replied that all was well at the outpost. To Olenin it all seemed ridiculous; it was as if these Cossacks were playing at being soldiers. But these formalities soon gave place to ordinary ways of behaviour, and the lieutenant, who was just as much a dashing Cossack as the others, began speaking fluently in Tartar to the interpreter. They made up a document, gave it to the scout, and received from him some money. Then they approached the body.

"Which of you is Luka Gavrilov?" asked the lieutenant.

Lukashka took off his cap and came forward.

"I have reported your exploit to the commander. I don't know what will come of it. I have recommended you for a cross. You are too young to be made a corporal. Can you read?"

"No, I can't."

"But what a fine fellow to look at!" said the lieutenant, again playing the commander. "Put on your cap. Which of the Gavrilovs does he come of? . . . The Broad, eh?"

"His nephew," replied the corporal.

"I know, I know. Well, lend a hand there," he said, turning to the Cossacks.

Lukashka's face shone with joy and seemed handsomer than usual. He moved away from the corporal, and having put on his cap, sat down beside Olenin.

When the body had been carried to the boat, the brother Chechen descended to the bank. The Cossacks involuntarily stepped aside to let him pass. He sprang into the boat and pushed off from the bank with a powerful thrust of his leg, and now, as Olenin noticed, for the first time threw a rapid glance over the Cossacks, and then abruptly asked his companion a question. The latter answered something and pointed to Lukashka. The Chechen looked at him and, turning slowly away, gazed at the opposite bank. The look expressed not hatred, but cold contempt. He again made some remark.

"What is he saying?" Olenin asked of the fidgety scout.

"Yours kill ours, ours kill yours. It's always the same," replied the scout, evidently making it up, and his white teeth flashed in a smile as he jumped into the boat.

The dead man's brother sat motionless, gazing at the opposite bank. He was so full of hatred and contempt that there was nothing on this side of the river that could move his curiosity. The scout, standing up at one end of the boat and dipping his paddle now on one side, now on the other, steered skilfully, while talking without pause. The boat became smaller and smaller as it moved obliquely across the stream; the voices became scarcely audible, and at last, still within sight, they landed on

the opposite bank, where their horses stood waiting. There they lifted out the corpse, and (though the horse shied) laid it across one of the saddles, mounted, and rode at a foot-pace along the road past an *aul*, from which a crowd came out to look at them.

The Cossacks on the Russian side of the river were highly satisfied and jolly. Laughter and jokes were heard on all sides. The lieutenant and the head of the village entered the mud hut to regale themselves. Lukashka, vainly striving to impart a sedate expression to his merry face, sat down with his elbows on his knees beside Olenin, and whittled away at a stick.

"Why do you smoke?" he said with assumed curiosity. "Is it good?"

Apparently his only reason for speaking was that he had noticed Olenin felt ill at ease and isolated among the Cossacks.

"It's just a habit," answered Olenin. "Why?"

"H'm, if one of us were to smoke there would be trouble! Look there now, the mountains are not far off," continued Lukashka, "yet you can't reach there! How will you get back alone? It's getting dark. I'll take you, if you like. You ask the corporal to give me leave."

"What a fine fellow!" thought Olenin, looking at the Cossack's cheerful face. He remembered Maryanka and the kiss he had heard by the gate, and he was sorry for Lukashka and his lack of culture. "What confusion it is," he thought. "A man kills another, and is as happy and satisfied with himself as if he had done something excellent. Can it be that nothing tells him that he has no reason for rejoicing, and that happiness lies not in killing, but in sacrificing oneself?"

"Well, you had better not meet him again now, friend!" said one of the Cossacks, who had seen the boat off, addressing Lukashka. "Did you hear him asking about you?"

Lukashka raised his head. "My godson?" said Lukashka, meaning by that word the dead Chechen.

"Your godson won't rise, but the red one is the godson's brother!"

"Let him thank God that he got off whole himself," replied Lukashka.

"What are you glad about?" asked Olenin. "Supposing your brother had been killed, would you be glad?"

The Cossack looked at Olenin with laughing eyes. He seemed to have understood all that Olenin wished to say to him, but to be above such considerations.

"Well, that happens too. Don't our fellows get killed sometimes?"

CHAPTER XXII

The lieutenant and the head of the village rode away; and Olenin, to please Lukashka as well as to avoid going back alone through the dark forest, asked the corporal to give Lukashka leave, and the corporal did so. Olenin thought that Lukashka wanted to see Maryanka, and he was also glad of the companionship of such a pleasant-looking and sociable Cossack. Lukashka and Maryanka he involuntarily united in his mind, and he found pleasure in thinking about them. "He loves Maryanka," thought Olenin, "and I could love her." And a powerful novel emotion of tenderness overcame him as they walked homewards together through the dark forest. Lukashka, too, felt happy; something akin to love made itself felt between these two very different young men. Every time they glanced at one another they wanted to laugh.

"By which gates do you enter?" asked Olenin.

"By the middle ones. But I'll see you as far as the marsh. After that you have nothing to fear."

Olenin laughed.

"Do you think I am afraid? Go back, thank you very much. I can get on alone."

"That's all right. What have I to do? And how can you help being afraid? Even we are afraid," said Lukashka to set Olenin's self-esteem at rest, and laughed too.

"Then come in with me. We'll have a talk and a drink, and in the morning you can go back."

"Do you think I can't find a place to spend the night!" laughed Lukashka. "But the corporal asked me to go back."

"I heard you singing last night, and I saw you, too"

"Well. . . ." And Lukashka shook his head.

"Is it true you're getting married?" asked Olenin.

"Mother wants me to marry. But I have not got a horse yet."

"Aren't you in the regular service?"

"Not by a long way! I've only just joined. I haven't got a horse yet, and I can't get one. That's why the marriage does not come off."

"And what would a horse cost?"

"We were bargaining for one over the river the other day, and they would not take sixty silver rubles for it, though it was only a Nogai horse."

"Will you come and be my *drabant*?" (A *drabant* was a kind of orderly attached to an officer when campaigning.) "I'll get it arranged and will give you a horse," said Olenin suddenly. "Really now, I have two and I don't need both."

"Don't need both?" Lukashka repeated, laughing. "Why should you make us a present? We'll get on by ourselves, with God's help."

"No, really! Or don't you want to be a *drabant*?" said Olenin, glad that it had entered his head to give a horse to Lukashka; though, without knowing why, he felt uncomfortable and confused and did not know what to say when he tried to speak.

Lukashka was the first to break the silence.

"Have you a house of your own in Russia?" he asked.

It had grown quite dark before, talking in this way, they approached the village. They were still surrounded by the deep gloom of the forest. The wind moaned in the tree-tops. The jackals suddenly seemed to be crying quite close beside them, howling, chuckling, and sobbing, but ahead of them in the village the sounds of women's voices and the barking of dogs could already be heard; the outlines of the huts were clearly to be seen; lights gleamed, and the air was filled with the peculiar smell of *kizyak* smoke. And the feeling came over Olenin, that night especially, that here in this village was his home, his family, all his happiness, and that he had never lived and would never live so happily anywhere as he did in this Cossack village. He was so fond of everybody and especially of Lukashka that night. When they reached home, Olenin, to Lukashka's great surprise, led out of the shed with his own hands a horse he had bought in Groznaya—not the one he usually rode but another, not a bad horse though no longer young—and gave it to Lukashka.

"Why should you give me a present?" said Lukashka. "I have not done anything for you yet."

"Really it is nothing," answered Olenin. "Take it, some day you will give me a present... we'll go on an expedition against the enemy together."

Lukashka became confused.

"But what d'you mean by it? A horse costs a lot of money, you know," he said without looking at the horse.

"Take it, take it! If you don't, you will offend me. Vanyusha! Take the grey horse to his house."

Lukashka took hold of the halter.

"Well, then, thank you! This is something I never expected, I must say."

Olenin was as happy as a boy of twelve.

"Tie it up here. It's a good horse. I bought it in Groz-

naya; it gallops splendidly! Vanyusha, bring us some *chikhir*. Come into the hut."

The wine was brought. Lukashka sat down and took the winebowl.

"God willing, I'll find a way to repay you," he said, drinking down his wine. "What's your name?"

"Dmitry Andreich."

"Well, Dmitry Andreich, God bless you. We will be *kunaks*. Now you must come to see us. We may not be rich people, but we know how to treat a *kunak*, and I will tell Mother that if you need anything—clotted cream or grapes—and if you come to the cordon, I'm your servant to go hunting, or to go across the river, anywhere you like! There now, only the other day, what a boar I killed, and I shared it out among the Cossacks; but if I had only known, I'd have given it to you."

"That's all right, thank you! But don't harness the horse, it has never been in harness."

"Why harness it? And there is something else I'll tell you, if you like," said Lukashka, lowering his voice. "I've got a *kunak*, Girei Khan. He asked me to lie in ambush with him by the road where they come down from the mountains. Shall we go together? I'll not betray you. I'll be your *murid*."*

"Yes, we'll go; we'll go some day."

Lukashka seemed quite to have recovered his composure and to have understood Olenin's attitude towards him. His calmness and the ease of his behaviour surprised Olenin, and he even found it slightly unpleasant. They talked long, and it was late when Lukashka, not tipsy (he was never tipsy) but with a good deal of drink inside him, shook hands with Olenin and left him. Olenin looked out of the window to see what he would do. Lukashka went out slowly, his head lowered. Then,

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* *Murid*—here, instructor.—*Tr.*

having led the horse out of the gate, he suddenly shook his head, sprang on to its back like a cat, gathered up the reins of the halter, gave a shout and galloped down the street.

Olenin had expected that Lukashka would go to share his joy with Maryanka, but, though he had not done so, Olenin still felt his soul more at ease than ever before in his life. He was as delighted as a boy, and could not refrain from telling Vanyusha, not only that he had given Lukashka the horse, but also why he had done it, as well as his new theory of happiness.

Vanyusha did not approve of this theory, and announced that *l'argent il n'y a pas*! and that therefore it was all nonsense.

Lukashka rode home, jumped off the horse, and handed it over to his mother, telling her to let it out with the communal Cossack herd. He himself had to return to the cordon that same night. His dumb sister undertook to take care of the horse, and explained by signs that when she saw the man who had given the horse, she would bow down at his feet. The old woman only shook her head at her son's story, and decided in her own mind that he had stolen it. She therefore told the deaf girl to take it to the herd before daybreak.

Lukashka went back alone to the cordon, pondering over Olenin's action. He did not consider the horse a good one, yet it was worth at least forty rubles, and he was very glad to have the present. But why it had been given him he could not at all understand, and therefore he did not experience the least feeling of gratitude. On the contrary, vague suspicions that the cadet had some evil intentions towards him filled his mind. What those intentions were he could not tell, but neither could he admit the idea that a stranger would give him a horse worth forty rubles for nothing, just out of kindness; it seemed impossible. Had he been drunk, one might under-

stand it! He might have wished to show off. But the cadet had been sober and therefore must have wished to bribe him to do something wrong. "Eh, humbug!" thought Lukashka. "Haven't I got the horse, and we'll see later on. I'm not a fool myself, and we shall see who'll get the better of the other," he thought, feeling the necessity of being on his guard and therefore arousing in himself unfriendly feelings towards Olenin. He told no one how he had got the horse. To some he said he had bought it, to others he replied evasively. However, the truth soon got about in the village, and Lukashka's mother, and Maryanka, as well as Ilya Vasilyevich and other Cossacks, when they heard of Olenin's unnecessary gift, were perplexed, and began to be on their guard against the cadet. But despite their fears, his action aroused in them a great respect for his *simplicity* and wealth.

"Have you heard," said one, "that cadet quartered on Ilya Vasilich has thrown away a fifty-ruble horse on Lukashka? He must be rich! ..."

"Yes, I heard of it," replied another sententiously, "he must have done him some great service. We shall see what will come of him. Eh! what luck that *Urvan* has!"

"Those cadets are a cunning lot," said a third. "See if he don't go setting fire to a house, or something!"

CHAPTER XXIII

Olenin's life went on with monotonous regularity. He had little intercourse with the commanding officers or with his equals. The position of a rich cadet in the Caucasus was peculiarly advantageous in this respect. He was not sent out to work, or for training. As a reward for taking part in a campaign, he was recommended for a commission, and meanwhile he was left in peace. The officers regarded him as an aristocrat, and behaved

towards him with dignity. And for his part, card-playing and the officers' carousals accompanied by the soldier-singers, of which he had had experience when he was with the detachment, did not attract him, so that he, too, avoided the society and the life of the officers in the village. The life of officers stationed in a Cossack village has long had its own definite form. Just as every cadet or officer when in a fort regularly drinks porter, plays cards and discusses the rewards given for taking part in the campaigns, so in the Cossack villages he regularly drinks *chikhir* with his hosts, treats the girls to sweet-meats and honey, dangles after the Cossack women, and falls in love, and occasionally marries there. Olenin had always taken his own path and had an unconscious objection to the beaten tracks. And here, too, he did not fall into the rut of a Caucasian officer's life.

It came quite naturally to him to wake up at daybreak. After drinking tea and admiring from his porch the mountains, the morning, and Maryanka, he would put on a tattered ox-hide coat, sandals of soaked raw hide, buckle on a dagger, take a gun, with cigarettes and some food in a little bag, call his dog, and soon after five o'clock he would start for the forest beyond the village. Towards seven in the evening he returned tired and hungry, with five or six pheasants hanging from his belt (sometimes with some other animal), and with his bag of food and cigarettes untouched. Had the thoughts in his head lain like the cigarettes in the bag, one might have seen that during all those fourteen hours not a single thought had moved there.

He returned morally fresh, strong, and perfectly happy, and he could not tell what he had been thinking about all the time. Were they ideas, memories, or dreams, that had been passing through his mind? They were frequently all three. He would rouse himself and ask what he had been thinking about; and would see himself as a Cossack,

working in a vineyard with his Cossack wife, or an *abrek* in the mountains, or a boar running away from himself. And all the time he kept peering and watching for a pheasant, a boar, or a deer.

In the evening, Uncle Yeroshka would be sure to be sitting with him. Vanyusha would bring a jug of *chikhir*, and they would converse quietly, drink, then part and go quite contentedly to bed. The next day he would again go shooting, again be healthily weary, again they would sit conversing and drink their fill, and again be happy. Sometimes, on a holiday or a day of rest, Olenin spent the whole day at home. Then his chief occupation was watching Maryanka, whose every movement, without his realizing it himself, he followed greedily from his window or his porch. He regarded Maryanka and loved her (so he thought) just as he loved the beauty of the mountains and the sky, and he had no thought of entering into any relations with her. It seemed to him that between him and her such relations as there were between her and the Cossack Lukashka, could not exist, and still less, such relations as often existed between rich officers and other Cossack girls. It seemed to him that if he tried to do as his fellow officers did, he would exchange his complete enjoyment of contemplation for an abyss of suffering, disillusionment and remorse. Besides, he had already achieved a triumph of self-abnegation in connection with her, which had given him great pleasure; but above all he was in a way afraid of Maryanka, and would not for anything have ventured to utter a word of love to her lightly.

Once during the summer when Olenin had not gone out shooting but was sitting at home, quite unexpectedly a Moscow acquaintance, a very young man whom he had met in society, came in.

"Ah, *mon cher*, my dear fellow, how glad I was when I heard that you were here!" he began in his Moscow

French, and he went on intermingling French words in his remarks. "They said, 'Olenin.' What Olenin? And I was so pleased.... Fancy fate bringing us together here! Well, and how are you? How? Why?" And Prince Beletsky told his whole story: how he had temporarily entered the regiment, how the Commander-in-Chief had offered to take him as an aide-de-camp, and how he would take up the post after this campaign, although personally he felt quite indifferent about it.

"Living here, in this hole, one must at least make a career—get a cross—or a rank—be transferred to the Guards. That is quite indispensable, not for myself, of course, but for the sake of my relations and friends. The prince received me very well; he is a very decent fellow," said Beletsky, and went on unceasingly: "I have been recommended for the St. Anna's Cross, for the expedition. Now I shall stay here a bit until we start on the campaign. It's capital here. What women! Well, and how are you getting on? I was told by our captain, Startsev, you know, a kind-hearted, stupid creature.... Well, he said you were living like an awful savage, seeing no one! I quite understand you don't want to be mixed up with the set of officers we have here. I am so glad now you and I will be able to see something of one another. I have put up at the corporal's house. There is such a girl there, Ustenka! I tell you, she is just charming."

And more and more French and Russian words came pouring forth from that world which Olenin thought he had left for ever.

The general opinion about Beletsky was that he was a nice good-natured fellow. Perhaps he really was; but in spite of his pretty, good-natured face, Olenin thought him extremely unpleasant. He seemed simply to exhale that vileness which Olenin had renounced. What vexed him most was that he could not—had not the strength—

to rebuff this man, who came from that world. That old world he used to belong to seemed to have an irresistible claim on him. Olenin felt angry with Beletsky and with himself, yet, against his wish, he introduced French phrases into his own conversation, was interested in the Commander-in-Chief and in their Moscow acquaintances, and because he and Beletsky in this Cossack village both spoke French, he spoke contemptuously of their fellow officers, and of the Cossacks, and was friendly with Beletsky, promising to visit him and inviting him to drop in to see him. Olenin, however, did not himself go to see Beletsky.

Vanyusha for his part approved of Beletsky, remarking that he was a real gentleman.

Beletsky at once adopted the customary life of rich officer in a Cossack village.

Before Olenin's eyes, in one month he came to be like an old resident of the village; he made the old men drunk, arranged evening parties, and himself went to parties arranged by the girls, bragged of his conquests, and even got so far that, for some unknown reason, the women and girls began calling him Grandad, and the Cossacks, to whom a man who loved wine and women was clearly understandable, got used to him and even liked him better than they did Olenin, who was a puzzle to them.

CHAPTER XXIV

It was five in the morning. Vanyusha was in the porch lighting the samovar, and using the leg of a long boot to fan it. Olenin had already ridden off to bathe in the Terek. (He had recently invented a new amusement, that of bathing his horse in the river.) His landlady was in her outhouse and the dense smoke of the kindling fire rose from the chimney. The girl was milking the buffalo cow in the shed. "Can't stand still, the wretch!" came her

impatient voice, followed by the rhythmical sound of milking.

From the street in front of the house, horse's hoofs were heard clattering briskly, and Olenin, riding bare-back on a handsome dark-grey horse which was still wet and shining, rode up to the gate. Maryanka's shapely head, tied round with a red kerchief, appeared from the shed, and again disappeared. Olenin was wearing a red silk shirt, a white Circassian coat girdled with a strap which carried a dagger, and a tall hat. He sat his wet, well-fed horse with a slightly conscious elegance, and holding his gun at his back, stooped to open the gate. His hair was still wet, and his face shone with youth and health. He thought himself handsome, agile, and like a *dzhigit*; but he was mistaken. To any experienced Caucasian, he was still only a soldier.

When he noticed that the girl had put out her head, he leaned over with particular smartness, threw open the gate and, tightening the reins, swished his whip and entered the yard. "Is tea ready, Vanyusha?" he cried gaily, not looking at the door of the shed. He felt with pleasure how his fine horse, bunching up its hind quarters, pulling at the bridle and quivering in every muscle, pranced on the hard clay of the yard, ready to take a flying leap over the fence. "*C'est prêt,*" answered Vanyusha. Olenin felt Maryanka's beautiful head was still looking out of the shed, but he did not turn to look at her. As he jumped down from his horse he caught his gun against the porch, staggered awkwardly and turned a frightened look towards the shed, where there was no one to be seen, and whence the sound of milking could still be heard.

Soon after he had entered the hut he came out again and sat down to his glass of tea with his pipe and a book on the side of the porch which was not yet exposed to the rays of the sun. He meant not to go anywhere before

dinner that day, and to write some long-postponed letters; but somehow he felt disinclined to leave his place in the porch, and he was as reluctant to go back into the hut as if it had been a prison. The housewife had heated her stove, and the girl, having driven out the cattle, had come back and was collecting *kizyak* and heaping it up along the fence. Olenin went on reading but did not understand a word of what was written in the book that lay open before him. He kept lifting his eyes from it and looking at the strong young woman who was moving about the yard. Whether she stepped into the moist morning shadow cast by the house, or went out into the joyous young light that streamed into the middle of the yard, so that the whole of her graceful figure in its bright-coloured garment gleamed in the sunshine and cast a black shadow—always he feared to miss any one of her movements. It delighted him to see how freely and gracefully her figure bowed to the ground; into what folds her only garment, a pink smock, draped itself on her bosom and down her shapely legs; how she drew herself up and her tight-drawn smock showed the firm outline of her heaving breast; how the soles of her slender feet in her worn red slippers touched the ground without altering their shape; how her strong arms with the sleeves rolled up, exerting the muscles, used the spade almost as if in anger, and how her deep dark eyes sometimes glanced at him. Though the delicate brows frowned, her eyes expressed pleasure, and a knowledge of her own beauty.

"I say, Olenin, have you been up long?" said Beletsky, as he entered the yard, dressed in the coat of a Caucasian officer.

"Ah, Beletsky," replied Olenin, holding out his hand. "How is it you are out so early?"

"I had to. I was driven out; we are having a ball tonight. Maryanka—of course you'll come to Ustenka's?" he added, turning to the girl. Olenin felt surprised that

Beletsky could address this woman so easily. But Maryanka, as though she had not heard him, bent her head, and throwing the spade across her shoulder, went with her firm masculine tread towards the outhouse.

"She's shy, the darling, she's shy," Beletsky called after her. "Shy of you," he added as, smiling gaily, he ran up the steps of the porch.

"How is it you are having a ball, and have been driven out?"

"It is to be at Ustenka's, at my landlady's, and you are invited. A ball means a pie and a gathering of girls."

"But what should we do there?"

Beletsky smiled knowingly and winked, jerking his head in the direction of the outhouse into which Maryanka had disappeared.

Olenin shrugged his shoulders and blushed. "Well, really, you are a strange fellow!" he said.

"Come now, don't pretend!"

Olenin frowned, and Beletsky, noticing this, smiled ingratiatingly.

"Oh, come, what do you mean?" he said. "Living in the same house—and such a fine girl, a splendid girl, a perfect beauty——"

"Wonderfully beautiful! I never saw such a woman before," Olenin replied.

"Well then?" said Beletsky, quite unable to understand the situation.

"It may be strange," replied Olenin, "but why should I not say what is true? Since I have lived here, women don't seem to exist for me. And it is so good, really! Now what can there be in common between us and women like these? Yeroshka—that's a different matter! He and I have a passion in common—hunting."

"There now! In common! And what have I in common with Amalia Ivanovna? It's the same thing! You may

say they're not very clean; that's another matter.... *A la guerre, comme à la guerre!...*"

"But I have never known any Amalia Ivanovnas, and have never known how to behave with women of that sort," replied Olenin. "One cannot respect them; but these I do respect."

"Well, go on respecting them! Who wants to prevent you?"

Olenin did not reply. He evidently wanted to complete what he had begun to say. It was very near to his heart.

"I know I am an exception...." He was evidently embarrassed. "But my life has so shaped itself that I not only see no necessity to renounce my rules, but that I could not live here, let alone live as happily as I am doing, were I to live as you do. Therefore I look for something and see something quite different in them from what you look for."

Beletsky raised his eyebrows incredulously. "Anyhow, come to me this evening; Maryanka will be there and I will make you acquainted. Do come, please! If you feel dull you can go away. Will you come?"

"I would come, but to speak frankly, I am afraid of being seriously carried away."

"Oh, oh, oh!" shouted Beletsky. "Only come, and I will look after you. Will you? On your word?"

"I would come, but really I don't understand what we shall do; what part we shall play!"

"Please, I beg of you. You will come?"

"Yes, perhaps I'll come," said Olenin.

"Really now! Charming women such as one sees nowhere else, and to live like a monk! What an idea! Why spoil your life and not make use of what is at hand? Have you heard that our company is ordered to Vozdvizhenskaya?"

"Not very likely. I was told the 8th Company would be sent there," said Olenin.

"No. I have had a letter from the aide-de-camp. He writes that the prince himself will take part in the campaign. I am very glad I shall see something of him. I'm beginning to get tired of this place."

"I hear we shall soon be making a raid."

"I have not heard of it; but I have heard that Krinovitsin has received the Order of St. Anna, for a raid. He expected a lieutenancy," said Beletsky, laughing. "Rather a let-down, what! He went to headquarters about it...."

It was growing dusk and Olenin began thinking about the party. The invitation he had received worried him. He felt inclined to go, but what might take place there seemed strange, absurd, and even rather alarming. He knew that neither Cossack men nor older women, nor any one besides the girls, were to be there. What was going to happen? How was he to behave? What would they talk about? What connection was there between him and those wild Cossack girls? Beletsky had told him of such curious, cynical, and yet strict relations. It seemed strange to think that he would be there in the same hut with Maryanka and perhaps might have to talk to her. It seemed to him impossible when he remembered her majestic bearing. But Beletsky spoke of it as if it were all perfectly simple. "Is it possible that Beletsky will treat Maryanka in the same way? That is interesting," he thought. "No, better not go. It's all so horrid, so vulgar, and above all—it leads to nothing!" But again he was worried by the question of what would take place; and besides, he felt as if bound by a promise. He went out without having made up his mind one way or the other; but he walked as far as Beletsky's, and went in there.

The hut in which Beletsky lived was like Olenin's. It was raised nearly five feet from the ground on wooden piles, and had two rooms. In the first (which Olenin

entered by the steep flight of steps) feather beds, rugs, blankets and cushions were tastefully and handsomely arranged, Cossack-fashion, along the main wall. On the side walls hung brass pannikins and weapons, while on the floor, under a bench, lay water-melons and pumpkins. In the second room there was a big brick stove, a table, benches, and sectarian icons. It was here that Beletsky was quartered, with his camp-bed and his pack and trunks. His weapons hung on the wall with a little rug behind them, and on the table were his toilet appliances and some portraits. A silk dressing-gown had been thrown on to a bench. Beletsky himself, fresh and pretty, lay on the bed in his underclothing, reading *Les Trois Mousquetaires.*

He jumped up.

"There, you see how I have arranged things. It's fine, isn't it? I'm so glad you have come. They are working furiously. Do you know what the pie is made of? Dough, with a stuffing of pork and grapes. But that's not all! You just look at the commotion out there!"

And really, on looking out of the window they saw an unusual bustle going on in the hut. Girls ran in and out, now for one thing and now for another. "Will it soon be ready?" called Beletsky.

"Very soon! Why? Is Grandad hungry?" And peals of laughter came from the hut.

Ustenka, plump, small, rosy, and pretty, with her sleeves turned up, ran into Beletsky's hut to fetch some plates.

"Get away, or I shall smash the plates!" she squeaked, escaping from Beletsky. "You'd better come and help," she shouted, laughing, to Olenin. "And don't forget to get some refreshments for the girls." ("Refreshments" meaning spice-bread and sweets.)

"And has Maryanka come?"

"Of course! She brought the dough."

"Do you know," said Beletsky, "if one were to dress Ustenka up and clean and polish her a bit, she'd be better than all our beauties. Have you ever seen that Cossack woman who married a colonel; she was charming! Borshcheva. What dignity! Where do they get it?..."

"I have not seen Borshcheva, but I think nothing could be better than the costume they wear here."

"Ah, I'm first-rate at fitting into any kind of life," said Beletsky with a sigh of pleasure. "I'll go and see what they are up to." He threw his dressing-gown over his shoulders and ran out, shouting, "And you look after the 'refreshments.'"

Olenin sent Beletsky's orderly to buy spice-bread and honey; but it suddenly seemed to him so disgusting to give money (as if he were bribing someone) that he gave no definite reply to the orderly's question: "How much spice-bread with peppermint, and how much with honey?"

"Just as you please."

"Shall I spend all the money," asked the old soldier significantly. "The peppermint is dearer. It's sixteen kopeks."

"Yes, yes, spend it all," answered Olenin, and sat down by the window, surprised that his heart was thumping as if he were preparing himself for some serious crime. He heard screaming and shrieking in the girls' hut when Beletsky went there, and a few moments later saw how, accompanied by shrieks, bustle, and laughter, he jumped out and ran down the steps. "Turned out," he said.

A little later Ustenka entered, and solemnly invited her visitors to come in, announcing that all was ready.

When they came into the room they saw that every thing was really ready. Ustenka was rearranging the cushions along the wall. On the table, which was covered by a disproportionately small cloth, was a decanter of *chikhir* and some dried fish. The room smelt of dough and

grapes. Some half-dozen girls in smart *beshmet*, their heads not covered, as usual, with kerchiefs, were huddled together in a corner behind the stove, whispering, giggling, and spluttering with laughter.

"I humbly beg you to do honour to my patron saint," said Ustenka, inviting her guests to the table.

Olenin noticed Maryanka among the group of girls, who without exception were all pretty, and he felt vexed and hurt to be meeting her in such vulgar and awkward circumstances. Feeling stupid and awkward, he made up his mind to do what Beletsky did. Beletsky stepped to the table somewhat solemnly, yet with confidence and ease, drank a glass of wine to Ustenka's health, and invited the others to do the same. Ustenka announced that girls did not drink.

"We might, with a little honey," exclaimed a voice from the group.

The orderly, who had just returned with the honey and spice-cakes, was called in. He looked askance (whether with envy or with contempt) at the gentlemen, who in his opinion were *on the spree*; and carefully and conscientiously handed over to them a piece of honeycomb and the cakes, wrapped up in a piece of rough paper, and began explaining circumstantially all about the price and the change, but Beletsky sent him away. Having mixed honey with wine in the glasses, and having lavishly scattered the three pounds of spice-cakes on the table, Beletsky dragged the girls from their corner by force, made them sit down at the table, and began distributing the cakes among them. Olenin involuntarily noticed how Maryanka's sunburnt but small hand closed on two round peppermint nuts and one brown one, and that she did not know what to do with them. The conversation was halting and uncongenial, in spite of Ustenka's and Beletsky's free and easy manner and their wish to enliven the company. Olenin faltered and tried to think of

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something to say, feeling that he was exciting curiosity and perhaps provoking ridicule and infecting the others with his shyness. He blushed, and it seemed to him that Maryanka in particular was feeling uncomfortable. "They must be expecting us to give them some money," he thought. "How are we to do it? And what is the quickest way of doing it and getting out?"

CHAPTER XXV

"How is it you don't know your own lodger?" said Beletsky, addressing Maryanka.

"How can I know him if he never comes to see us?" answered Maryanka, with a look at Olenin.

Olenin felt frightened, he did not know of what. He flushed, and hardly knowing what he was saying, remarked:

"I'm afraid of your mother. She gave me such a scolding the first time I went in."

Maryanka burst out laughing.

"And that was enough to make you frightened?" she said, and glanced at him and turned away.

It was the first time Olenin had seen the whole of her beautiful face. Till then he had seen her with her kerchief covering her to the eyes. No wonder she was reckoned the beauty of the village.

Ustenka was a pretty girl, small, plump, rosy, with merry brown eyes and red lips which were perpetually smiling and chattering. Maryanka, on the contrary, was certainly not pretty, but beautiful. Her features might have been considered too masculine and almost harsh but for her tall, finely-proportioned figure, her full breast and shoulders, and especially the severe yet tender expression of her long dark eyes, which were darkly shadowed beneath their black brows; but for the gentle expression of her mouth and smile. She rarely smiled, but her smile

was always striking. She seemed to radiate virginal strength and health. All the girls were good-looking, but they themselves, and Beletsky, and the orderly when he brought in the spice-cakes, all involuntarily gazed at Maryanka, and anyone addressing the girls was sure to address her. She seemed a proud and happy queen among them.

Beletsky, trying to keep up the spirit of the party, chattered incessantly, made the girls hand round *chikhir*, fooled about with them, and kept making improper remarks in French about Maryanka's beauty to Olenin, calling her "yours" (*la vôtre*), and inviting him to behave as he did himself. Olenin felt more and more uncomfortable. He was devising an excuse to get out and run away, when Beletsky announced that Ustenka, whose name day it was, must offer *chikhir* to the men with a kiss. She consented, on condition that they should put money on her plate, as is the custom at weddings.

"Why the devil did I come to this disgusting feast!" thought Olenin, rising to go away.

"Where are you off to?"

"I'll fetch some tobacco," he said, meaning to escape; but Beletsky seized his hand, saying in French, "I have some money." "So one has to pay here, one can't go away," Olenin thought bitterly, vexed at his own awkwardness. "Can't I really behave like Beletsky? I ought not to have come, but once I am here I must not spoil their fun. I must drink like a Cossack." And taking the wooden bowl (holding about eight tumblers) he almost filled it with *chikhir* and drank it up. The girls looked at him, surprised and almost frightened, while he drank. It seemed to them strange and unseemly. Ustenka brought them another glass each, and kissed them both.

"There girls, now we'll have some fun," she said, jingling the four silver rubles the men had put on the

plate. Olenin no longer felt awkward, but became talkative.

"Now, Maryanka, it's your turn to offer us wine and a kiss," said Beletsky, seizing her hand.

"Yes, I'll give you such a kiss!" she said, as if preparing to strike at him.

"You can kiss Grandad without payment," said another girl.

"There's a good girl," said Beletsky, kissing the struggling girl. "No, you must offer it," he insisted, addressing Maryanka. "Offer a glass to your lodger."

And taking her by the hand he led her to the bench and sat her down beside Olenin.

"What a beauty," he said, turning her head to see it in profile.

Maryanka did not resist but, proudly smiling, turned her long eyes towards Olenin.

"A beautiful girl," repeated Beletsky, and Maryanka's look seemed to affirm, "Yes, see what a beauty I am."

Without considering what he was doing, Olenin embraced Maryanka and was going to kiss her, but she suddenly extricated herself, nearly knocked Beletsky over and, pushing the top off the table, sprang away towards the stove. There was much shouting and laughter. Then Beletsky whispered something to the girls, and suddenly they all ran out into the passage and locked the door behind them.

"Why did you kiss Beletsky and won't kiss me?" asked Olenin.

"Oh, just so. I don't want to; that's all!" she answered, biting her lip and frowning. "He's Grandad," she added with a smile. She went to the door and began to bang at it. "Why have you locked the door, you devils?"

"Well, let them be there, and we'll stay here," said Olenin, drawing closer to her.

She frowned, and sternly pushed him away with her hand. And again she appeared so majestically handsome to Olenin that he came to his senses and felt ashamed of what he was doing. He went to the door and began pulling at it himself.

"Beletsky! Open the door! Don't play the fool!"

Maryanka again gave a bright, happy laugh. "Ah, you're afraid of me?" she said.

"Indeed I am, you're as cross as your mother."

"You should spend more of your time with Yeroshka; that will make the girls love you!" And she smiled, looking straight and close into his eyes. He did not know what to reply.

"And if I were to come to see you," he let fall.

"That would be a different matter," she replied, tossing her head.

At that moment Beletsky pushed the door open, and Maryanka sprang away from it, and in doing so her thigh struck Olenin's leg. "It's all nonsense what I have been thinking about, love and self-abnegation and Lukashka. Happiness is the one thing. He who is happy is right," flashed through Olenin's mind, and with a strength unexpected to himself, he seized and kissed Maryanka on her temple and her cheek. Maryanka was not angry, but only burst into a loud laugh and ran out to the other girls.

That was the end of the party. Ustenka's mother, returned from her work, gave the girls a scolding and turned them all out.

CHAPTER XXVI

"Yes," thought Olenin, as he walked home. "I need only slacken the reins a bit and I might fall desperately in love with this Cossack girl." He went to bed with these thoughts, but expected it all to blow over, and

that he would continue to live as before. But the old life did not return. His relations to Maryanka were changed. The wall that had separated them was broken down. Olenin now greeted her every time they met.

The master of the house, having returned to collect the rent, on hearing of Olenin's wealth and generosity, invited him to his hut. The old woman received him cordially and, from the day of the party onwards, Olenin often went in of an evening and sat with them till late at night. He seemed to be living in the village just as he used to, but within him everything had changed. He spent his days in the forest, and towards eight o'clock, when it began to grow dusk, he would go to see his hosts, alone or with Uncle Yeroshka. They grew so used to him that they were surprised when he stayed away. He paid well for his wine, and was a quiet fellow. Vanyusha would bring him his tea, and he would sit down in a corner near the stove. The old woman did not mind him, but went on with her work, and they talked over their tea or their *chikhir* about Cossack affairs, about the neighbours, or about Russia: Olenin relating and the others inquiring. Sometimes he brought a book and read to himself. Maryanka crouched like a wild goat with her feet drawn up under her, sometimes on the ledge above the stove, sometimes in a dark corner. She did not take part in the conversations, but Olenin saw her eyes and face and heard her moving or cracking sunflower seeds, and he felt that she listened with her whole being when he spoke; and was aware of her presence while he silently read to himself. Sometimes he thought her eyes were fixed on him and, meeting their radiance, he involuntarily became silent and gazed at her. Then she would instantly hide her face, and he would pretend to be deep in conversation with the old woman, while he listened all the time to her breathing and to her every movement, and waited for her to look at him again. In

the presence of others she was generally bright and friendly with him, but when they were alone together she was shy and rough. Sometimes he came in before Maryanka had returned home. Suddenly he would hear her firm footsteps and catch a glimmer of her blue cotton smock at the open door. Then she would step into the middle of the hut, catch sight of him, and her eyes would give a scarcely perceptible kindly smile, and he would feel happy and frightened.

He neither sought nor wished for anything from her, but every day her presence became more and more necessary to him.

Olenin had so fully entered into the life of the Cossack village that his past seemed quite foreign to him. As to the future, especially a future outside the world in which he was now living, it did not interest him at all. When he received letters from home, from relatives and friends, he was offended by the evident distress with which they regarded him as a lost man, while he, in his village, considered those as lost who did not live as he was living. He felt sure he would never repent of having broken away from his former surroundings and of having settled down in this village to such a solitary and original life. When out on expeditions and when quartered at one of the forts, he felt happy too; but it was here, from under Uncle Yeroshka's wing, from the forest and from his hut at the end of the village, and especially when he thought of Maryanka and Lukashka, that he seemed to see the falseness of his former life. That falseness had roused his indignation even before, but now it seemed inexpressibly vile and ridiculous. Here he felt more and more free every day, and more and more of a man. The Caucasus now appeared entirely different to what his imagination had painted it. He had found nothing at all like his dreams, nor like the descriptions of the Caucasus he had heard and read. "It's nothing to do with

those Caucasian cloaks, precipices, Amalat Beks, heroes and villains," he thought. "The people live as nature lives: they die, they are born, they unite, and more are born; they fight, eat and drink, rejoice and die, without any restrictions but those that nature imposes on sun and grass, on animal and tree. They have no other laws." And therefore, these people, compared to himself, appeared to him beautiful, strong, and free, and the sight of them made him feel ashamed and sorry for himself. Often it seriously occurred to him to throw up everything, to get registered as a Cossack, to buy a house and cattle, and marry a Cossack woman (only not Maryanka, whom he conceded to Lukashka), and to live with Uncle Yeroshka, and go shooting and fishing with him, and go with the Cossacks on their expeditions. "Why ever don't I do it? What am I waiting for?" he asked himself, and he egged himself on, and shamed himself: "Am I afraid of doing what I hold to be reasonable and right? Is the wish to be a simple Cossack, to live close to nature, not to injure anyone, but even to do good to others, more stupid than my former dreams, such as those of becoming a minister of state, or a colonel?" But a voice seemed to say that he should wait and not take any decision. He was held back by a dim consciousness that he could not live altogether like Yeroshka and Lukashka, because he had a different idea of happiness—he was held back by the thought that happiness lay in self-abnegation. What he had done for Lukashka continued to give him joy. He kept looking for occasions to sacrifice himself for others, but did not meet with them. Sometimes he forgot this newly-discovered recipe for happiness and considered himself capable of identifying his life with Uncle Yeroshka's, but he then quickly bethought himself and promptly clutched at the idea of conscious self-abnegation, and from that basis looked calmly and proudly upon all men and upon the happiness of others.

CHAPTER XXVII

Just before the grape-gathering, Lukashka came on horseback to see Olenin. He looked more dashing than ever.

"Well? Are you getting married?" asked Olenin, greeting him merrily.

Lukashka gave no direct reply. "There, I've exchanged your horse across the river. This *is* a horse! A Kabarda horse from the Lov* stud. I know horses."

They examined the new horse and made him caracole about the yard. The horse really was an exceptionally fine one, a bay gelding, broad and long in the body, with glossy coat, thick silky tail and the soft fine mane and crest of a thoroughbred. He was so well fed that one might "go to sleep on his back," as Lukashka expressed it. His hoofs, eyes, teeth, were exquisitely shaped and sharply outlined, as one only finds them in very pure-bred horses. Olenin could not help admiring the horse; he had not yet met with such a beauty in the Caucasus.

"And how he goes!" said Lukashka, patting its neck. "What a step! And so clever—he simply runs after his master."

"Did you have to add much to make the exchange?" asked Olenin.

"Didn't count it," answered Lukashka with a smile. "I got him from a *kunak*."

"A wonderfully beautiful horse! What would you take for it?" Olenin asked.

"I have been offered a hundred and fifty rubles for it, but I'll give it you for nothing," said Lukashka merrily. "Only say the word, and it's yours. I'll unsaddle it, and

* The Lov stud farm was considered one of the best in the Caucasus.—*Ed.*

you may take it. Only give me some sort of a horse for my duties."

"No, on no account."

"Well, then, here is a present I've brought you," said Lukashka, unfastening his girdle and taking out one of the two daggers which hung from it. "I got it from across the river."

"Oh, thank you."

"And Mother has promised to bring you some grapes herself."

"That's quite unnecessary. We'll settle up some day. You see I don't offer you any money for the dagger!"

"How could you, we are *kunaks*. It's just the same as with Girei Khan, across the river. He took me into his home, and said, 'Choose what you like!' So I took this sword. It's our custom."

They went into the hut and had a drink.

"Are you staying here awhile?" asked Olenin.

"No, I have come to say good-bye. They are sending me from the cordon to a company beyond the Terek. I am going tonight with my comrade, Nazarka."

"And when is the wedding to be?"

"I shall be coming back for the betrothal, and then I shall return to the company again," Lukashka replied reluctantly.

"What, and see nothing of your betrothed?"

"Just so—what is the good of looking at her? If you come out on an expedition, ask in our company for Lukashka the Broad. The number of boars there are out there! I've killed two. I'll take you."

"Well, good-bye! Christ be with you."

Lukashka mounted his horse, and without calling on Maryanka, rode caracoling down the street, where Nazarka was already awaiting him.

"I say, shan't we call round?" asked Nazarka, winking in the direction of Yamka's house.

"All right," said Lukashka. "Here, take my horse to her, and if I don't come soon, give him some hay. I shall reach the company by the morning, anyway."

"Hasn't the cadet given you anything more?"

"I am thankful to have paid him back with a dagger—he was going to ask for the horse," said Lukashka, dismounting and handing over the horse to Nazarka.

He darted into the yard, past Olenin's very window, and came up to the window of the cornet's hut. It was already quite dark. Maryanka, wearing only her smock, was combing her hair, preparing for bed.

"It is me," whispered the Cossack.

Maryanka's look was severely indifferent; but her face suddenly brightened when she heard her name. She opened the window and leaned out, frightened and joyous.

"What—what do you want?" she said.

"Open!" whispered Lukashka. "Let me in for a minute. I am so sick of waiting!"

He took hold of her head through the window and kissed her.

"Really, do open!"

"Why do you talk nonsense? I've told you I won't. Have you come for long?"

He did not answer, but went on kissing her, and she did not ask again.

"There, I can't even put my arm round you properly through the window," said Lukashka.

"Maryanka dear!" came the voice of her mother, "who is that with you?"

Lukashka took off his cap, so as not to be recognized, and crouched down by the window.

"Go, be quick!" whispered Maryanka. "Lukashka has called round," she answered; "he is asking for Daddy."

"Well, then send him here!"

"He's gone; says he's in a hurry."

In fact, Lukashka, stooping as with big strides he passed under the windows, ran out through the yard and towards Yamka's house, unseen by anyone but Olenin. After drinking two bowls of *chikhir* he and Nazarka rode away to the outpost. The night was warm, dark, and calm. They rode in silence; only the footfall of their horses was heard. Lukashka started a song about the Cossack Mingal, but stopped before he had finished the first verse, and, after a pause, turning to Nazarka, said:

"I say, she wouldn't let me in!"

"Oh?" rejoined Nazarka. "I knew she wouldn't. D'you know what Yamka told me? The cadet has begun going to their house. Uncle Yeroshka brags that he got a gun from the cadet for getting him Maryanka."

"He lies, the old devil!" said Lukashka angrily. "She's not that kind of girl. If the old devil doesn't look out, I'll warm his sides." And he began his favourite song:

From the village of Izmailovo,
From the master's favourite garden,
A bright-eyed falcon from his cage once flew,
And soon after him a huntsman young came riding.
With his hand he beckoned to the bright-eyed falcon:
"Come, falcon, come, to my right hand,
For if you come not, the Christian tsar
Will hang me, will hang me on high."
The bright-eyed falcon then made answer:
"In a golden cage you knew not how to keep me,
On your right hand you knew not how to hold me.
Now I will fly to the blue sea, far, far away,
And there I will kill a white swan for myself,
And I will eat my fill of the sweet swan-flesh."

CHAPTER XXVIII

The betrothal was taking place in the cornet's house. Lukashka had returned to the village, but had not been to see Olenin; and Olenin had not gone to the betrothal though he had been invited. He was sad, as he had never been since he settled in this Cossack village. He had seen Lukashka in his best clothes go past earlier in the evening with his mother, and he was worried why Lukashka was so cold towards him. Olenin shut himself up in his hut and began writing in his diary.

"I have pondered many things lately, and I have changed much," he wrote, "and I have come back to the copy-book maxim: The one way to be happy is to love, to love self-denyingly, to love everybody and everything; to spread a web of love on all sides and to take all who come into it. In this way I have caught Vanyusha, Uncle Yeroshka, Lukashka, and Maryanka."

As Olenin was finishing this sentence, Uncle Yeroshka entered the room.

Yeroshka was in the happiest frame of mind. A few evenings before this, Olenin had gone to see him, and had found him with a proud and happy face deftly skinning the carcass of a boar with a small knife in the yard. The dogs (Lyam, his pet, among them) were lying close by, watching what he was doing, and gently wagging their tails. The little boys were respectfully looking at him through the fence, and not even teasing him as was their wont. His women neighbours, who were as a rule not too gracious towards him, greeted him and brought him, one a jug of *chikhir*, another some clotted cream, and a third a little flour. The next day Yeroshka sat in his store room, smeared with blood, and distributed pounds of boar-flesh, taking in payment money from some and wine from others. His face clearly expressed: "God has sent me luck, I have killed a boar; so now I

am wanted." The natural consequence was that he had begun to drink, and had gone on for four days, never leaving the village. Besides which he had had something to drink at the betrothal.

He came to Olenin quite drunk, his face red, his beard tangled, but wearing a new red *beshmet* trimmed with gold braid; and he brought with him a balalaika which he had obtained beyond the river. He had long promised Olenin this treat, and felt in the mood for it, so that he was sorry to find Olenin writing.

"Write on, write on, friend," he whispered, as if he thought some spirit sat between him and the paper and must not be frightened away, and he softly and silently sat down on the floor. When Uncle Yeroshka was drunk, his favourite position was on the floor. Olenin looked round, ordered some wine to be brought, and continued to write. Yeroshka found it dull to drink by himself, and he wished to talk.

"I've been to the betrothal at the cornet's. But there! They're swine!—Don't want them!—Have come to you."

"And where did you get your balalaika?" asked Olenin, still writing.

"Ive been across the river, friend, that's where I got it," he answered, also very quietly. "I'm a master on this instrument. Tartar or Cossack, gentlemen's or peasant songs, any kind you like."

Olenin looked at him again, smiled, and went on writing.

His smile emboldened the old man.

"Come, leave off, my lad, leave off!" he said with sudden firmness. "Come, somebody has done you wrong, but leave them alone, spit on them! Come, what's the use of writing and writing, what's the good?"

And he tried to mimic Olenin by tapping the floor with his thick fingers and twisting his big face to express contempt.

"What's the good of writing quibbles. Better have a spree and show you're a man!"

No other conception of writing found a place in his head, except that of legal chicanery. Olenin burst out laughing, and so did Yeroshka. Then, jumping up from the floor, the latter began to show off his skill on the balalaika, and to sing Tartar songs.

"Why write, kind friend! You'd better listen to what I'll sing to you. When you're dead you'll not hear any more songs. Make merry now!"

First he sang a song of his own composing, accompanied by a dance:

Ah, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee,
When they saw him, where was he?
In a booth, at the fair,
He was selling pins there.

Then he sang a song he had learnt from his former sergeant-major friend:

Deep I fell in love on Monday,
Tuesday nothing did but sigh,
Wednesday all my love declared,
Thursday waited her reply.
Friday, late, it came at last,
Then all hope for me was past!
Saturday my life to take
I determined like a man,
But for my salvation's sake
Sunday morning changed my plan!

Then he sang again:

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Then he sang again:

Ah, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee,
When they saw him, where was he?

And after that, winking, shrugging his shoulders and footing it to the tune, he sang:

I will kiss you and embrace,
Ribbons red twine round you;
And I'll call you little Grace.
Oh! you little Grace now do
Tell me, do you love me true?

And he became so excited that with a sudden flourish he started dancing all alone around the room.

Songs like "dee, dee, dee"—"gentlemen's songs"—he sang for Olenin's benefit, but after drinking three more tumblers of *chikhir* he remembered old times and began singing real Cossack and Tartar songs. In the midst of one of his favourite songs his voice suddenly trembled, and he stopped singing, and only continued strumming on the balalaika.

"Oh, my dear friend!" he said.

The strangeness in his voice made Olenin look round. The old man was weeping. Tears stood in his eyes, and one tear was running down his cheek. "You are gone, my young days, and will never come back!" he said, sobbing and halting. "Drink, why don't you drink!" he suddenly shouted in a deafening voice, without wiping away his tears.

There was one Tartar song that specially moved him. It had few words, but its charm lay in the sad refrain: "Ai dai, dalalai!" Yeroshka translated the words of the song: "A youth drove his sheep from the *aul* to the mountains, the Russians came and burned the *aul*, they killed all the men, and took all the women into bondage. The youth returned from the mountains. Where the *aul* had stood was an empty waste; his mother not there, nor his brothers, nor his house; one tree alone was left standing. The youth sat beneath the tree and wept. 'Alone like thee,

alone am I,' and began singing: 'Ai dai, dalalai!'" And the old man repeated several times this wailing, heart-rending refrain.

When he had finished the refrain, Yeroshka suddenly seized a gun that hung on the wall, rushed out into the yard, and fired off both barrels into the air. Then again he began, more dolefully, his "Ai dai, dalalai—ah, ah," and ceased.

Olenin followed him into the porch and looked up into the starry sky in the direction where the shots had flashed. In the cornet's house there were lights, and the sound of voices. Girls were crowding round the porch and the windows, and running backwards and forwards between the house and the outhouse. Some Cossacks rushed out of the house and started whooping wildly, re-echoing the refrain of Uncle Yeroshka's song and his shots.

"Why are you not at the betrothal?" asked Olenin.

"Never mind them! Never mind them!" muttered the old man, who had evidently been offended by something there. "Don't like them, I don't. Oh, those people! Come back into the hut! Let them make merry by themselves and we'll make merry by ourselves."

Olenin went in.

"And Lukashka, is he happy? Won't he come to see me?" he asked.

"What, Lukashka? They've lied to him and said I am getting his girl for you," whispered the old man. "But what's the girl? She will be ours if we want her. Give enough money—and she's ours. I'll fix it up for you. Believe me, I will!"

"No, Uncle, money can do nothing if she does not love me. You'd better not talk like that!"

"They don't love us, you and me. We are orphans," Uncle Yeroshka said suddenly, and again he began to cry.

Listening to the old man's talk, Olenin had drunk

more than usual. "So now my Lukashka is happy," he thought; yet he felt sad. The old man had drunk so much that evening that he fell down on the floor, and Vanyusha, who had to call soldiers in to help him, spat as they dragged the old man out. He was so angry with the old man for his bad behaviour that he even forgot to say something in French.

CHAPTER XXIX

It was August. For days the sky had been cloudless; the sun scorched unbearably, and from early morning the warm wind raised a whirl of hot sand from the dunes and from the road, and bore it in the air over rushes, trees, and villages.

The grass and the leaves on the trees were coated with dust; the roads and dried-up salt-marshes were swept bare and rang underfoot. The water had long since subsided in the Terek, and was rapidly vanishing in the ditches. The slimy banks of the pond near the village were trodden bare by the cattle, and all day long you could hear the splashing of water and the shouting of bathing girls and boys. The sand dunes and the rushes were already drying up in the steppes, and the lowing cattle ran away into the fields in the day-time. The wild beasts migrated into the distant reed-beds and to the hills beyond the Terek. Mosquitoes and gnats swarmed in thick clouds over the lowlands and villages. The snow peaks were hidden in grey mist. The air was rarefied and stifling. It was said that *abreks* had crossed the now shallow river, and were prowling on this side of it. Every night the sun set in a glowing red blaze. It was the busiest time of the year. The villagers all swarmed in the melon-fields and the vineyards. The vineyards, thickly overgrown with twining verdure, lay in cool, deep shade. Everywhere ripe, heavy, black clusters peeped

out between the broad translucent leaves. Creaking carts moved slowly along the dusty road from the vineyards, heaped high with black grapes. Clusters of grapes, crushed by the wheels, lay in the dust. Boys and girls in smocks stained with grape-juice, with grapes in their hands and mouths, ran after their mothers. On the road one continually came across tattered labourers with baskets of grapes on their powerful shoulders; Cossack girls, wrapped in kerchiefs to their eyes, drove bullocks harnessed to carts laden high with fruit. Soldiers who happened to meet them asked for grapes, and the girls, clambering up without stopping their carts, would take armfuls of grapes and drop them into the skirts of the soldiers' coats. In some homesteads they had already begun pressing the fruit; and the smell of the emptied skins filled the air. One saw the blood-red troughs in the penthouses in the yards, and Nogai labourers with their trousers rolled up and their legs stained with the juice. Grunting pigs gorged themselves on the empty skins, and rolled about in them. The flat roofs of the outhouses were all spread over with black clusters that were drying in the sun. Crows and magpies crowded round the roofs, picking the seeds and fluttering from one place to another.

The fruits of the year's labour were being merrily gathered in; and this year the fruit was unusually fine and plentiful.

In the shady green vineyards, amid a sea of vines, on all sides laughter, songs, merriment, and the voices of women were to be heard and glimpses of their bright-coloured garments could be seen.

Just at noon, Maryanka was sitting in the family vineyard in the shade of a peach-tree, getting out the family dinner from under an unharnessed cart. Opposite her, on a horse-cloth, sat the cornet (now returned from school) washing his hands by pouring water on them from a little jug. Her little brother, who had just come

straight out of the pond and stood panting and wiping his face with his wide sleeves, gazed anxiously at his sister and his mother, awaiting his dinner. The old mother, with her sleeves rolled up over her strong sunburnt arms, was arranging grapes, dried fish, clotted cream and bread on a little low circular Tartar table. The cornet wiped his hands, took off his cap, crossed himself, and moved nearer to the table. The boy seized the jug and eagerly began to drink. The mother and daughter crossed their legs under them and sat down by the table. Even in the shade it was intolerably hot. An unpleasant smell hung over the vineyard, and the strong warm wind monotonously swaying the tops of the pear, peach, and mulberry trees which stood here and there in the vineyard brought no coolness. The cornet, having crossed himself once more, took a little jug of *chikhir* that stood behind him covered with a vine-leaf, and after drinking from the mouth of the jug, passed it to the old woman. He had nothing on but his shirt, which was unfastened at the neck and exposed his shaggy muscular chest. His thin cunning face looked cheerful; neither in his attitude nor in his words was his usual wiliness to be seen; he was cheerful and natural.

"Shall we finish the bit beyond the shed tonight?" he asked, wiping his wet beard.

"We'll manage it," replied his wife, "if only the weather does not hinder us. The Demkins have not half-finished yet," she added. "Ustenka is working all on her own there, wearing herself out."

"What can you expect of them?" said the old man proudly.

"Here, have a drink, Maryanka dear!" said the old woman, passing the jug to the girl. "God willing, we'll have enough to pay for the wedding feast," added the old woman.

"That won't be yet awhile," said the cornet with a slight frown.

The girl hung her head.

"Why shouldn't we mention it?" said the old woman. "The affair is settled, and the time is drawing near too."

"Don't make plans too far ahead," said the cornet. "Now we have the harvest to get in."

"Have you seen Lukashka's new horse?" asked the old woman. "The one Dmitry Andreich gave him is gone—he's exchanged it."

"No, I have not; but I spoke with the servant today," said the cornet. "And he said his master has again received a thousand rubles."

"Rolling in riches, there's no other word for it," said the old woman.

The whole family felt cheerful and contented. The work was going well. The grapes were more abundant and finer than they had expected. After dinner Maryanka threw some grass to the oxen, folded her *beshmet* for a pillow, and lay down under the wagon on the juicy down-trodden grass. She wore only a red silk kerchief over her head, and a faded blue print smock; yet she felt unbearably hot. Her face was burning and she did not know where to put her feet; her eyes were misted with sleep and weariness; her lips parted involuntarily, and her chest heaved heavily and deeply.

The busy time of year had begun a fortnight ago and now the girl's life was filled with continuous heavy labour. At dawn she jumped up, washed her face with cold water, wrapped herself in a shawl, and ran out barefoot to see to the cattle. Then she hurriedly put on her shoes and her *beshmet* and, taking a small bundle of bread, harnessed the bullocks and drove away to the vineyards for the whole day. There she cut the grapes and carried the baskets, with only one hour's interval

for rest, and in the evening she returned to the village, bright and not tired, dragging the bullocks by their halters or driving them with a long stick. After attending to the cattle, she took some sunflower seeds in the wide sleeve of her smock and went to the corner of the street to crack them and have some fun with the other girls. But as soon as it was dusk, she returned home, and after having supper with her parents and her brother in the dark outhouse, she went into the hut, healthy and free from care, and climbed on to the stove-ledge, where, half-drowsing, she listened to their lodger's conversation. As soon as he went away, she would throw herself down on her bed and sleep soundly and quietly till morning. And so it went on day after day. She had not seen Lukashka since the day of their betrothal, but calmly awaited the wedding.

She had got used to their lodger and felt his intent looks with pleasure.

CHAPTER XXX

Although there was no escape from the heat, and the mosquitoes swarmed in the cool shadow of the cart, and her little brother tossing about beside her kept pushing her, Maryanka, having drawn her kerchief over her head, was just falling asleep, when suddenly their neighbour Ustenka came running towards her and, diving under the cart, lay down beside her.

"Sleep, girls, sleep!" said Ustenka, making herself comfortable under the cart. "Wait a bit," she exclaimed, "that won't do!" She jumped up, plucked some green branches, and stuck them through the wheels on both sides of the wagon, and hung her *beshmet* over them. "Let me in," she shouted to the little boy, as she again crept under the cart. "Is this the place for a Cossack, with the girls? Go away!" When alone under the cart with her

friend, Ustenka suddenly put both her arms round her and, clinging close to her, began kissing her cheeks and neck.

"Darling, darling," she kept repeating, between bursts of shrill, clear laughter.

"Why, you've learnt it from Grandad," said Maryanka, struggling. "Stop it!"

And they both broke into such peals of laughter that Maryanka's mother shouted to them to be quiet.

"Jealous, are you?" asked Ustenka in a whisper.

"Nonsense! Let us sleep. What have you come for?"

But Ustenka kept on, "I'll tell you what for, you just wait!"

Maryanka raised herself on her elbow and arranged her kerchief.

"Well, what is it?"

"I know something about your lodger!"

"There's nothing to know," said Maryanka.

"Oh, you rogue of a girl!" said Ustenka, nudging her with her elbow and laughing. "Won't tell anything. Does he come to you?"

"He does. What of it?" said Maryanka, with a sudden blush.

"Now I'm a simple lass. I tell everybody. Why should I pretend?" said Ustenka; and her bright rosy face suddenly became pensive. "I'm doing nobody any harm, am I? I love him, that's all about it."

"Grandad, do you mean?"

"Yes!"

"But it's a sin."

"Ah, Maryanka! When is a girl to have a good time if she doesn't take the chance while she's still free? When I marry a Cossack, I shall have children and put up with my cares. Why, when you get married to Lukashka not even a thought of joy will enter your head· it'll be just children and work!"

"Well? Some who are married live happily. It makes no difference!" Maryanka replied calmly.

"Do tell me just this once, what has passed between you and Lukashka?"

"What has passed? He proposed a match. Father put it off for a year; but now it's been settled, and they'll marry us in autumn."

"But what did he say to you?"

Maryanka smiled.

"What should he say? He said he loved me. He kept asking me to come to the vineyards with him."

"What a sticker he is! You didn't go, did you? And what a daredevil he has become! He's the pride of the village. He makes merry out there in the army too! The other day our Kirka came home. What a horse Lukashka's got! he said. But I expect he frets after you all the same. And what else did he say?"

"Must you know everything?" said Maryanka laughing. "One night he rode up to my window, tipsy, and asked me to let him in."

"And you didn't let him?"

"Let him in, indeed! Once I have said a thing, I keep to it, firm as a rock," Maryanka answered seriously.

"But he's a fine fellow! If he wanted her, no girl would refuse him."

"Well, let him go to the others," Maryanka replied proudly.

"Aren't you sorry for him?"

"I am, but I will have no nonsense. It's wrong."

Ustenka suddenly dropped her head on her friend's breast, seized hold of her and shook with smothered laughter. "You silly fool!" she exclaimed quite out of breath. "You don't want to be happy." And she began tickling Maryanka.

"Hi, leave off!" said Maryanka, screaming and laughing.

"Hark at those young devils! Quite frisky! Not tired yet!" came the old woman's sleepy voice from the cart.

"You don't want happiness," repeated Ustenka in a whisper, rising a little. "But you are lucky, that you are! How they love you! You are so prickly, and yet they love you. Ah, if I were in your place I'd soon turn your lodger's head! I noticed him when you were at our house. He was ready to eat you with his eyes. The things Grandad has given me! And yours, they say, is the richest of the Russians. His orderly says they have their own serfs."

Maryanka raised herself, and after thinking a moment, smiled.

"Do you know what he once told me, the lodger, I mean?" she said, biting a blade of grass. "He said, 'I'd like to be a Cossack like Lukashka or your brother Lazutka.' What do you think he meant?"

"Oh, just told you the first thing that came into his head," answered Ustenka. "What does mine not say! Just as if he was loony!"

Maryanka dropped her head on her folded *beshmet,* threw her arm over Ustenka's shoulder, and shut her eyes. "He wanted to come and work in the vineyard today. Father asked him," she said after a short silence, and fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXXI

The sun had come out from behind the pear-tree that had shaded the cart, and, even through the branches that Ustenka had fixed up, it scorched the faces of the sleeping girls. Maryanka woke up and began arranging the kerchief on her head. Looking about her, beyond the pear-tree she noticed their lodger, who, with his gun on his shoulder, stood talking to her father. She nudged Ustenka and smilingly pointed him out to her.

"I went yesterday, and didn't find a thing," Olenin was saying as he looked about him uneasily, not seeing Maryanka through the branches.

"Ah, you should go out in that direction, describe an arc. There is a disused vineyard, denominated as the waste, hares are always to be found there," said the cornet, at once changing his manner of speech.

"A fine thing to go looking for hares in these busy times! You had better come and help us, and do some work with the girls," the old woman said merrily. "Now then, girls, up with you!" she cried.

Maryanka and Ustenka under the cart were whispering, and could hardly restrain their laughter.

Since it had become known that Olenin had given a horse worth fifty rubles to Lukashka, his hosts had become more amiable; the cornet seemed particularly pleased at his daughter's growing intimacy with Olenin.

"But I don't know how to do the work," replied Olenin, trying not to look through the green branches under the cart, where he had now noticed Maryanka's blue smock and red kerchief.

"Come, I'll give you some peaches," said the old woman.

"Ancient Cossack hospitality, just her old woman's silliness," said the cornet, explaining his wife's words as if to correct them. "In Russia, I expect, it's not so much peaches as pineapple jam and preserves you have been accustomed to eat at your pleasure."

"So you say hares are to be found in the disused vineyard?" asked Olenin. "I will go there." And throwing a hasty glance through the green branches, he raised his cap and disappeared between the regular rows of green vines.

The sun had already sunk behind the fence of the vineyards and its broken rays were gleaming through

the translucent leaves, when Olenin returned to his hosts' vineyard. The wind had dropped, and a cool freshness was beginning to spread around. By some instinct Olenin recognized from afar Maryanka's blue smock among the rows of vines, and, picking grapes on his way, he approached her. His tired dog went on ahead, also seizing low-hanging clusters of grapes in its wet mouth.

Maryanka, her face flushed, her sleeves rolled up, and her kerchief down below her chin, was rapidly cutting the heavy clusters and laying them in a basket. Without letting go of the vine she had hold of, she stopped to smile pleasantly at him, and resumed her work. Olenin drew near, and slung his gun over his back to have his hands free. "Where are the others, God be with you? Are you alone?" he had meant to say. But he did not say it, and only raised his cap in silence. He felt uncomfortable when alone with Maryanka, but as if on purpose to torture himself, he approached her.

"You'll be shooting the women with your gun like that," said Maryanka.

"No, I shan't shoot them." They were both silent, and then, after a pause, she said: "You should help me." He took out his knife and began silently to cut off the clusters. Reaching down under the leaves, he cut a thick bunch, weighing about three pounds, the grapes of which grew so close that they flattened each other for want of space, and showed it to Maryanka.

"Must they all be cut? Isn't this one too green?"

"Give it here."

Their hands touched. Olenin took her hand, and she looked at him smiling.

"Are you going to be married soon?" he asked.

She did not answer, and turned away with unsmiling eyes.

"Do you love Lukashka?"

"What's that to you?"

"I envy him."

"Very likely!"

"No, really. You are so beautiful!"

And he suddenly felt terribly ashamed of having said it, the words seemed so commonplace to him. He flushed, lost control of himself, and seized both her hands.

"Whatever I am, I'm not for you. Why do you make fun of me?" replied Maryanka, but her look showed how certainly she knew he was not making fun.

"Making fun? If you only knew how I——"

The words sounded still more commonplace, they accorded still less with what he felt; but still he continued, "I don't know what I would not do for you."

"Leave me alone, you sticker!"

But her face, her shining eyes, her swelling bosom, her shapely legs, said something quite different. It seemed to him that she understood how petty were all the things he had said, but that she was superior to such considerations. It seemed to him she had long known all he wished, yet was unable, to tell her, but wanted to hear how he would say it.

"And how can she help knowing," he thought, "since I only want to tell her all that she herself is? But she does not wish to understand, does not wish to reply."

"Hullo!" Ustenka's high-pitched voice called suddenly from behind the vines, and then her shrill laugh. "Come and help me, Dmitry Andreich. I am all alone," she cried, thrusting her round, naive little face through the vines.

Olenin did not answer, nor move from his place.

Maryanka went on cutting, but continually looked up at Olenin. He was about to say something, but stopped, shrugged his shoulders and, jerking the strap of his gun, walked with rapid strides out of the vineyard.

CHAPTER XXXII

He stopped once or twice, listening to the ringing laughter of Maryanka and Ustenka, who had got together and were shouting something. Olenin spent the whole evening hunting in the forest. He returned home at dusk, empty-handed. As he crossed the yard, he noticed the open door of the outhouse, and a blue smock showing through it. He called to Vanyusha very loud, so as to let them know that he was back, and then sat down in the porch in his usual place. His hosts had already returned from the vineyard; they came out of the outhouse and entered the hut, but did not ask him in. Maryanka went out of the gate twice. Once in the twilight it seemed to him that she was looking at him. With eager eyes he followed her every movement, but could not make up his mind to approach her. When she disappeared into the hut he left the porch and began pacing up and down the yard, listening to every sound in his hosts' hut. He heard them talking in the evening, heard them having their supper, and pulling out their bedding, and getting into bed; he heard Maryanka laughing at something, and then heard everything growing gradually quiet.

The cornet and his wife talked awhile in whispers, and someone was breathing. Olenin went back to his hut. Vanyusha lay asleep in his clothes. Olenin envied him, and again went out to pace the yard, always expecting something, but no one came, no one moved, and he only heard the regular breathing of three people. He knew Maryanka's breathing and listened to it and to the beating of his own heart. In the village everything was quiet. The waning moon rose late and the deep-breathing cattle in the yard became more visible as they lay down or slowly rose. "What is it I want?" Olenin asked himself angrily but could not tear himself away from the enchantment of the night. Suddenly he thought he distinctly

heard the floor creak and the sound of footsteps in his hosts' hut. He rushed to the door, but all was silent again, except for the sound of regular breathing, and in the yard the buffalo cow, after a deep sigh, again moved, heaved herself to her feet, swished her tail, and something splashed steadily on the dry clay ground, and then she lay down again in the dim moonlight. He asked himself: "What am I to do?" and firmly decided to go to bed, but again he heard sounds, and in his imagination there rose the image of Maryanka coming out into this moonlit misty night, and again he rushed to her window, and again heard the sound of footsteps. Not till just before dawn did he go up to her window and push at the shutter and then run to the door, and this time he really heard Maryanka sigh and her footsteps. He grasped the latch and knocked. The floor hardly creaked under the bare cautious feet which approached the door. The latch clicked, the door creaked, and he noticed a faint smell of marjoram and pumpkin as the figure of Maryanka appeared in the doorway. He saw her only for an instant in the moonlight. She slammed the door and, muttering something, ran lightly back again. Olenin began rapping softly, but there was no response. He ran to the window and listened. Suddenly he was startled by a shrill squeaky man's voice.

"Fine!" exclaimed a rather small young Cossack in a white cap, coming across the yard close to Olenin. "I saw it all ... fine!"

Olenin recognized Nazarka, and was silent, not knowing what to do or say.

"Fine! I'll go and tell them at the office, and I'll tell her father! That's a fine cornet's daughter! One's not enough for her."

"What do you want of me, what are you after?" said Olenin.

"Nothing; I'll just tell them at the office."

Nazarka spoke very loud, and evidently did so intentionally, adding: "Clever cadet, eh!"

Olenin trembled and grew pale. "Come here, here!"

He seized the Cossack firmly by the arm and drew him towards his hut. "Nothing happened, she did not let me in and I meant no harm either. She is a decent girl——"

"We won't go into that——"

"But all the same I'll give you something now. Wait a bit!"

Nazarka said nothing. Olenin ran into his hut and brought out ten rubles, which he gave to the Cossack.

"Nothing happened, but still I was to blame, so I give this! Only for God's sake don't let anyone know, for nothing happened——"

"I wish you joy," said Nazarka, laughing, and went away.

Nazarka had come to the village that night at Lukashka's bidding, to find a place to hide a stolen horse, and passing by on his way home, had heard the sound of footsteps. When he returned next morning to his company, he bragged to his friend, and told him how cleverly he had made ten rubles.

Next morning Olenin met his hosts, and they knew nothing about the events of the night. He did not speak to Maryanka, and she only laughed a little when she looked at him. Next night he also passed without sleep, vainly wandering about the yard. The day after, he purposely spent shooting, and in the evening he went to see Beletsky, to escape from his own thoughts. He was afraid of his own feelings, and promised himself not to go to his hosts' any more.

The following night he was roused by the sergeant-major. His company was ordered to start at once on a raid.

Olenin was glad this had happened, and thought he would not again return to the village.

The raid lasted four days. The commander, who was a relative of Olenin's, desired to see him, and offered to let him remain with the staff, but this Olenin declined. He found that he could not live away from the village, and asked to be allowed to return to it. For having taken part in the raid, he received a soldier's cross, which he had formerly so much desired. Now he was quite indifferent about it, and even more indifferent about his promotion, the order for which had still not arrived.

Accompanied by Vanyusha, he rode back to the cordon without accident, several hours in advance of the rest of the company. He spent the whole evening in his porch, watching Maryanka, and he again walked about the yard, without aim or thought, all night.

CHAPTER XXXIII

It was late when he awoke the next day. His hosts were no longer in. He did not go shooting; now he took up a book, now went out into the porch, and now again re-entered the hut and lay down on the bed. Vanyusha thought he was ill.

Towards evening Olenin got up, resolutely began writing and wrote on till late in the evening. He wrote a letter, but did not post it, because he felt that no one would have understood what he wanted to say; and, besides, it was not necessary that anyone but himself should understand it.

This is what he wrote:

"I receive letters of condolence from Russia. They are afraid that I shall perish, buried in these wilds. They say about me: 'He will become coarse; he will be behind the times in everything; he will take to drink, and who knows but that he may marry a Cossack girl.' It was not

for nothing, they say, that General Yermolov declared: 'Anyone serving in the Caucasus for ten years either drinks himself to death or marries a loose woman.' How terrible! Indeed, it won't do for me to ruin myself when I might have the great happiness of even becoming the Countess B——'s husband, or a Court chamberlain, or a *Maréchal de noblesse* of my district. Oh, how repulsive and pitiable you all seem to me! You do not know what happiness is, and what life is! One must once taste life in all its natural beauty! One must see and understand what I see every day before me; those eternally unapproachable snowy peaks, and a majestic woman in that primitive beauty in which the first woman must have come from her Creator's hands. Then it becomes clear who is ruining himself, and who is living truly or falsely —you or I. If you only knew how despicable and pitiable you, in your delusions, seem to me! When I picture to myself, in place of my hut, my forests, and my love, those drawing-rooms, those women with their pomaded hair eked out with false curls, those unnaturally grimacing lips, those hidden, feeble, deformed limbs, and that chatter of obligatory drawing-room conversation, which has no right to the name—I feel unendurably revolted. I then see before me those obtuse faces, those rich eligible girls, whose looks seem to say: 'It's all right, you may come near, even though I'm rich,'—and that arranging and rearranging of seats, that shameless matchmaking, and that eternal tittle-tattle and pretence; those rules— with whom to shake hands, to whom only to nod, with whom to converse (and all this done deliberately, with a conviction of its inevitability), that continual ennui in the blood passing on from generation to generation. Try to understand or believe just this one thing: you need only see and comprehend what truth and beauty are, and all that you now say and think and all your wishes for me and for yourselves will crumble to dust!

"Happiness is being with Nature, seeing her, and conversing with her. 'He may even (God forbid) marry a common Cossack girl, and be quite lost socially,' I can imagine them saying of me with sincere pity! Yet the one thing I desire is to be quite 'lost,' in your sense of the word. I wish to marry a common Cossack girl, and I dare not, because it would be a height of happiness of which I am unworthy.

"Three months have passed since I first saw the Cossack girl, Maryanka. The views and prejudices of the world I had left were still fresh in me. I did not then believe that I could love this woman. I delighted in her beauty just as I delighted in the beauty of the mountains and the sky, nor could I help delighting in her, for she is as beautiful as they. I found that the sight of her beauty had become a necessity of my life, and I began asking myself whether I did not love her. But I could find nothing within myself at all like love, as I had imagined it to be. Mine was not the restlessness of loneliness and desire for marriage, nor was it platonic, still less a carnal love, such as I have experienced. I needed only to see her, to hear her, to know that she was near; and if I was not happy, at least I was at peace.

"After an evening gathering at which I met her and touched her, I felt that between that woman and myself there existed an indissoluble though unacknowledged bond against which I could not struggle; yet I did struggle. I asked myself: 'Is it possible to love a woman who will never understand the profoundest interests of my life? Is it possible to love a woman simply for her beauty, to love a statue?' But I was already in love with her, though I did not yet trust to my feelings.

"After that evening, when I first spoke to her, our relations changed. Before that, she had been to me a remote but majestic object of external nature; but since

then, she has become a human being. I began to meet her, to talk to her, and sometimes to go to work for her father and to spend whole evenings with them, and in this intimate intercourse she remained still in my eyes just as pure, inaccessible, and majestic. She always responded with equal calm, pride, and cheerful indifference. Sometimes she was friendly, but generally her every look, every word, and her every movement expressed this indifference—not contemptuous, but overwhelming and bewitching. Every day, with a feigned smile on my lips, I tried to play a part, and with torments of passion and desire in my heart I spoke banteringly to her. She saw that I was dissembling, but looked straight at me, cheerfully and simply. This position became unbearable. I wished not to deceive her, but to tell her all I felt and thought. I was extremely agitated. We were in the vineyard when I began to tell her of my love, in words I am now ashamed to remember. I am ashamed because I ought not to have dared to speak so to her, for she stood far above such words, and above the feeling they were meant to express. I said no more, but from that day my position has been intolerable. I did not wish to abase myself by continuing our former flippant relations, and at the same time I felt that I had not yet reached the level of straight and simple relations with her. I asked myself despairingly, 'What am I to do?' In foolish dreams I imagined her, now as my mistress and now as my wife, but rejected both ideas with disgust. To make her a wanton woman would be dreadful. It would be murder. To turn her into a fine lady, the wife of Dmitry Andreyevich Olenin, like a Cossack woman here who is married to one of our officers, would be still worse. Now could I turn Cossack, like Lukasha, and steal horses, get drunk on *chikhir*, sing rollicking songs, kill people, and, when drunk, climb in through her window to spend the night without a thought of who and what I am, it

would be different; then we might understand one another, and I might be happy.

"I tried to throw myself into that kind of life, but was still more conscious of my own weakness and artificiality. I could not forget myself and my complex, distorted, ugly past; and my future appears to me still more hopeless. Every day I have before me the distant snowy mountains, and this majestic, happy woman. But not for me is the only happiness possible in the world; I cannot have this woman! The most terrible and yet sweetest in my condition is that I feel that I understand her, but that she will never understand me; not because she is inferior; on the contrary she ought not to understand me. She is happy, she is like nature: consistent, calm, and self-sufficient; and I, a weak deformed being, want her to understand my deformity and my torments! I have not slept at night, but have aimlessly passed the time under her windows, not rendering account to myself of what was happening to me.

"On the 18th our company started on a raid, and I spent three days away from the village. I was sad and apathetic; the usual songs, cards, drinking-bouts, and talk of rewards in the regiment, were more repulsive than ever to me. Yesterday I returned home, and saw her, my hut, Uncle Yeroshka, and looked at the snowy mountains from my porch, and was seized by such a strong, new feeling of joy that I understood it all. I love this woman; I feel real love for the first and only time in my life. I know what has befallen me. I do not fear to be degraded by this feeling; I am not ashamed of my love, I am proud of it. It is not my fault that I love. It has come about against my will. I tried to escape from my love by self-abnegation, and tried to devise a joy in the Cossack Lukashka and Maryanka's love, but thereby only stirred up my own love and jealousy.

"This is not the ideal, the so-called exalted love, which I have known before; not that sort of attachment in which you admire your own love, and feel that the source of your emotion is within yourself, and do everything yourself. I have felt that too. It is still less a desire for enjoyment; it is something different. Perhaps in her I love nature, the personification of all that is beautiful in nature; yet I am not acting by my own will, it is some elemental force that loves through me; the whole of God's world, all nature, presses this love into my soul, and says, 'Love her.' I love her not with my mind, or my imagination, but with my whole being. Loving her, I feel myself to be an integral part of all God's joyous world.

"I wrote before about the new convictions to which my solitary life had brought me; but no one knows with what labour they shaped themselves within me, and with what joy I realized them, and saw a new way of life opening out before me; nothing was dearer to me than those convictions.... And now ... love has come, and neither they, nor any regrets for them, remain!

"It is even difficult for me to believe that I could have prized such a one-sided, cold, and abstract state of mind. Beauty came and scattered to the winds all that laborious inward toil; and no regret remains for what has vanished! Self-abnegation is all nonsense and absurdity! It is pride, a refuge from deserved unhappiness, and salvation from the envy of others' happiness. 'Live for others, and do good!'—Why? when in my soul there is only love for myself, and the desire to love her, and to live her life with her. Not for others, not for Lukashka I now desire happiness. I do not now love those others. Formerly I should have told myself that this is wrong. I should have tormented myself with the questions: What will become of her, of me, and of Lukashka? Now I don't care. I do not live by my own will, there is something

stronger than I which directs me. I suffer; but formerly I was dead, and only now do I live. Today I will go to their house and will tell her everything."

CHAPTER XXXIV

Late that evening, after writing this letter, Olenin went to his hosts' house. The old woman was sitting on a bench behind the stove, unwinding cocoons. Maryanka, with her head uncovered, sat sewing by the light of a candle. On seeing Olenin she jumped up, took her kerchief and stepped to the stove.

"Maryanka dear," said her mother, "won't you sit here with us a while?"

"No, I'm bare-headed," she replied, and sprang up on the stove.

Olenin could only see a knee and one of her shapely legs hanging down from the ledge. He treated the old woman to tea. She treated her guest to clotted cream, which she sent Maryanka to fetch. But, having put a plateful on the table, Maryanka again sprang on the stove, and Olenin only felt her eyes upon him. They talked of household matters. Dame Ulitka became animated, and went into raptures of hospitality. She brought Olenin preserved grapes and a grape tart, and some of her best wine, and pressed him to eat and drink with the rough yet proud hospitality of country folk, which is only found among those who produce their bread by the labour of their own hands.

The old woman, who had at first so astonished Olenin by her rudeness, now often touched him by her simple tenderness towards her daughter.

"Yes, we need not offend the Lord by grumbling! We have enough of everything, thank God. We have pressed enough *chikhir*, and done our preserving, and when we have sold three or four barrels of grapes, we shall still

have enough left to drink. Don't be in a hurry to leave us. We will make merry together at the wedding."

"And when is the wedding to be?" asked Olenin, feeling the blood suddenly rush to his face, while his heart beat irregularly and painfully. He heard a movement on the stove, and the sound of seeds being cracked.

"Well, you know, it ought to be next week. We are quite ready," the old woman replied, as simply and quietly as though Olenin did not exist. "I have got everything ready for Maryanka. We will give her away properly. Only there's one thing not quite right. Our Lukashka has been running wild lately. Much too wild! He's up to his tricks. The other day a Cossack came here from his company and said he had been to Nogai."

"He must mind he does not get caught," said Olenin.

"Yes, that's what I tell him. 'Mind, Lukashka, don't you get into mischief. Well, of course a young fellow naturally wants to cut a dash. But there's a time for everything. Suppose you have captured or stolen something and killed an *abrek*! Well, you're a fine fellow! But now you should settle down, or else there'll be trouble.' "

"Yes, I saw him a time or two in the division; he was always having a good time. He has sold another horse," said Olenin, and glanced towards the stove.

A pair of large dark eyes glittered at him severely and even hostilely.

He felt ashamed of what he had said. "What of it? He does no one any harm," Maryanka remarked suddenly. "He makes merry on his own money." And lowering her legs, she jumped down from the stove and went out, banging the door. Olenin followed her with his eyes as long as she was in the house; and then looked at the door and waited, understanding nothing of what Dame Ulitka was telling him.

A few minutes later some visitors arrived: an old man, Dame Ulitka's brother, with Uncle Yeroshka, and following them came Maryanka and Ustenka.

"Good evening," squeaked Ustenka. "Still on holiday?" she added, turning to Olenin.

"Yes, still on holiday," he replied, and felt, he did not know why, ashamed and ill at ease.

He wished to go away, but could not. It also seemed to him impossible to keep silent. The old man helped him by asking for a drink, and they had a drink. Olenin drank with Yeroshka, with the other Cossack, and again with Yeroshka, and the more he drank the heavier was his heart. But the two old men grew merry. The girls climbed on to the stove, where they sat whispering and looking at the men, who drank till it was late. Olenin did not talk, but drank more than the others. The Cossacks were shouting. The old woman would not let them have any more *chikhir*, and tried to get rid of them. The girls laughed at Uncle Yeroshka, and it was past ten when they all went out into the porch. The old men invited themselves to finish their merry-making at Olenin's. Ustenka ran off home, and Yeroshka led the old Cossack to Vanyusha. The old woman went out to tidy up the shed. Maryanka remained alone in the hut. Olenin felt suddenly fresh and joyous, as if he had only just woken up. He noticed everything, and having let the old men pass ahead, he turned back to the hut where Maryanka was preparing for bed. He went up to her and wished to say something, but his voice broke. She moved away from him, sat down cross-legged on her bed in the corner, and silently looked at him with wild and frightened eyes. She was evidently afraid of him. Olenin felt this. He felt sorry and ashamed of himself, and at the same time proud and pleased that he aroused at least that feeling in her.

"Maryanka!" he said, "Will you never take pity on me? I can't tell you how I love you."

She moved still farther away and said: "Listen to the wine talking!... You'll get nothing from me!"

"No, it is not the wine. Do not marry Lukashka. I will marry you."

"What am I saying," he thought as he uttered these words. "Shall I be able to say the same tomorrow? Yes, I shall, I am sure I shall, and I will repeat it now," replied an inner voice.

"Will you marry me?"

She looked at him seriously, and her fear seemed to have passed.

"Maryanka, I shall go out of my mind! I am not myself. I will do whatever you tell me," and madly tender words came from his lips of their own accord.

"Now then, what are you babbling about?" she interrupted, suddenly seizing the arm he was stretching towards her. She did not push his arm away, but pressed it firmly with her strong hard fingers.

"Do gentlemen marry Cossack girls? Go away!"

"But will you? Everything...."

"And what shall we do with Lukashka?" she said, laughing.

He snatched away the arm she was holding and firmly embraced her young body, but she sprang away like a fawn and ran barefooted into the porch; Olenin came to his senses and was terrified at himself. He again felt himself inexpressibly vile compared to her, yet not repenting for an instant what he had said, he went home and, without even glancing at the old men who were drinking in his room, he lay down and fell asleep more soundly than he had done for a long time.

CHAPTER XXXV

The next day was a holiday. In the evening all the people of the village, their holiday clothes gleaming in the sunset, were out in the street. That season more wine than usual had been produced, and the people were now free from their labours. In a month the Cossacks were to start on a campaign, and in many families preparations were being made for weddings.

Most of the people gathered in the square, in front of the Cossack village office and near the two shops, in one of which sweetstuffs and pumpkin seeds were sold, in the other kerchiefs and cotton prints. On the earth-embankment of the office building sat or stood round the old men in sober grey or black coats, without gold trimmings or any kind of ornament. They conversed among themselves quietly, in measured tones, about the harvest, about the young folk, about village affairs, and about old times, looking on with dignified composure at the younger generation. Passing by them, the women and girls stopped and bent their heads. The young Cossacks respectfully slackened their pace and raised their caps, holding them for a while over their heads. The old men would then stop speaking. Some of them watched the passers-by severely, others kindly, and in their turn slowly took off their caps and put them on again.

The Cossack girls had not yet started dancing their *khorovods.** Dressed in their bright-coloured *beshmets,* with white kerchiefs on their heads pulled down to their eyes, they sat in groups, either on the ground or on the earth-banks about the houses, sheltered from the slanting rays of the sun, and laughed and chattered in their ringing voices. Little boys and girls, playing in the

* The *khorovod* is a ring formed by girls, who move round, singing.—*Tr.*

square, sent their ball high up into the clear sky and ran about squealing and shouting. Older girls had already started dancing, and were singing timidly in their thin shrill voices. Clerks, lads not in the service, or home for the festival, bright-faced, and wearing smart white or red gold-trimmed Circassian coats, went about arm in arm, in twos or threes, from one group of women or girls to another, and stopped, joking and flirting with them. The Armenian shopkeeper, in a gold-trimmed coat of fine blue cloth, stood at the open door of his shop, through which piles of folded bright-coloured kerchiefs were visible, and with the conscious pride of an oriental tradesman, waited for customers. Two red-bearded barefooted Chechens, who had come from beyond the Terek to see the festival, squatted on their heels outside the house of a friend, nonchalantly smoking their little pipes and occasionally spitting as they watched the villagers and exchanged remarks with one another in their rapid guttural speech. Occasionally a workaday-looking soldier in an old overcoat passed among the bright-clad groups. Here and there the songs of tipsy Cossacks, who were merry-making, could already be heard. All the houses were locked up; the porches had been scrubbed clean the day before. Even the old women were out in the street, which was everywhere littered with the husks of pumpkin and melon seed. The air was warm and still, the sky deep and clear. Beyond the roofs the dull-white mountain range, which now seemed very near, was turning pink in the glow of the evening sun. Now and then, from the other side of the river, came the distant boom of a cannon, but above the village, mingling with one another, floated the merry sounds of the holiday.

Olenin had been pacing the yard all that morning, hoping to see Maryanka. But having put on her best clothes, she went to mass at the chapel, and afterwards sat with the other girls on an earth-embankment, crack-

ing seeds, sometimes, again together with her companions, she ran home, and each time gave the lodger a bright and kindly look. Olenin felt afraid to address her playfully, and in the presence of others. He wished to finish telling her what he had begun to say the night before, and to get her to give him a definite answer. He waited for another moment like that of yesterday evening; but the moment did not come, and he felt that he could not remain any longer in this uncertainty. She went out into the street again, and after waiting a while he, too, went out, and without knowing where he was going he followed her. He passed by the corner where she was sitting in her shining blue satin *beshmet*, and with an aching heart he heard the girls laughing behind him.

Beletsky's hut looked out on to the square. As Olenin was passing it he heard Beletsky's voice calling to him, "Come in," and in he went.

After exchanging a few words they both sat down by the window, and were soon joined by Yeroshka, who came in dressed in a new *beshmet*, and sat down on the floor beside them.

"There, that's the aristocratic party," said Beletsky with a smile, pointing with his cigarette to a bright-coloured group at the corner. "Mine is there too. Do you see her? In red. That's a new *beshmet* she's wearing. Why don't you start the *khorovod*?" he shouted, leaning out of the window. "Wait a bit, and then, when it grows dark, let us go too. Then we will invite them to Ustenka's. We must arrange a ball for them!"

"And I will come to Ustenka's," said Olenin in a decided tone. "Will Maryànka be there?"

"Yes, she'll be there. Do come!" said Beletsky, without the least surprise. "But isn't that picturesque?" he added, pointing to the motley crowds.

"Yes, very!" Olenin assented, trying to appear indifferent. "Festivals of this kind," he added, "always make me wonder why all these people should suddenly be contented and jolly. Today, for instance, just because it happens to be the fifteenth of the month, everything is festive. Eyes and faces, and voices and movements and garments, and the air and the sun, are all in a festive mood. But we, in Russia, no longer have any festivals!"

"Yes," said Beletsky, who did not like such reflections. "And why are you not drinking, old fellow?" he said, turning to Yeroshka.

Yeroshka winked at Olenin, pointing to Beletsky. "Eh, he's a proud one, that *kunak* of yours," he said.

Beletsky raised his glass.

"*Allah birdi*!" he said, emptying his glass. (*Allah birdi*, "God gave," is the usual toast of Caucasians, when drinking together.)

"*Sau bul*" ("Your health"), Yeroshka answered smiling, and emptied his glass.

"Call this a festival!" he said, turning to Olenin as he rose and looked out of the window. "What sort of festival is this? You should have seen them make merry in the old days! The women used to come out in their gold-trimmed *sarafans*.* Two rows of gold coins hanging round their necks, and gold-cloth head-dresses on their heads, and when they passed they made such a swish with their dresses.

"Every woman looked like a princess. Sometimes they'd come out, a whole herd of them, and begin singing songs till the whole air was a-ringing, and they went on making merry all night. And the Cossacks would roll out a barrel into the yards, and sit down and drink till break of day. And sometimes they'd link arms and stroll

* A kind of gored dress worn over a blouse of different material.—*Tr.*

through the village. Whoever they met they took along with them, and went from house to house. Sometimes they used to make merry for three days on end. Father used to come home—I still remember it—all red and swollen, no cap on his head, lost everything. He'd just come in and lie down. And mother knew what to do: she would bring him some fresh caviar, and a little *chikhir* to sober him up, and then run all over the village looking for his cap. Then he'd sleep for two days! That's the fellows they were then! But now what are they?"

"Well, and the girls in the *sarafans*, did they make merry all by themselves?" asked Beletsky.

"As if they would! Sometimes Cossacks would come on foot or on horse, and say, 'Let's break up the *khorovods*,' and they'd go, but the girls would take up cudgels. On Shrovetide, some young fellow would come galloping up, and they'd cudgel his horse and cudgel him too. But he'd break through, seize the one he loved, and carry her off. Oho! ... And how he would love her! Yes, and the girls in those days, they were regular queens!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

Just then two men rode out of a side-street into the square. One of them was Nazarka, the other Lukashka. Lukashka sat slightly sideways on his well-fed bay Kabarda horse, which stepped lightly over the hard road, tossing its beautiful head and fine glossy mane. The well-adjusted gun in its cover, the pistol at his back, and the cloak rolled up behind the saddle, showed that Lukashka had not come from a peaceful place, or from one near by. The smart way in which he sat a little sideways on his horse, the careless motion with which he touched the horse under its belly with his whip, and especially his half-closed black eyes, glistening as he looked proudly

around him, all expressed the conscious strength and self-confidence of youth. "Ever seen as fine a lad?" his eyes, glancing from side to side, seemed to say. The elegant horse with its silver ornaments and trappings, the weapons, and the handsome Cossack himself, attracted the attention of everyone in the square. Nazarka, lean and short, was by no means so well dressed. As he rode past the old men, Lukashka paused and raised his curly white sheepskin cap above his closely cropped black head.

"Well, have you carried off many Nogai horses?" asked a lean old man, frowning up at them.

"Have you counted them, Grandad, that you ask?" replied Lukashka, turning away.

"That's all very well, but you need not take the lad along with you," the old man muttered, with a still darker frown.

"Hark at the old devil, he knows everything," muttered Lukashka to himself, and a worried expression came over his face; but then, noticing a corner where a number of Cossack girls were standing, he turned his horse towards them.

"Good evening, girls!" he shouted in his powerful, resonant voice, suddenly checking his horse. "You've grown old without me, you witches!" And he laughed.

"Good evening, Lukashka! Good evening, bonny boy!" the merry voices answered.

"Have you brought much money? Buy some sweets for the girls! ... Have you come for long? True enough, it's long since we saw you...."

"Nazarka and I have just flown across to make a night of it," replied Lukashka, raising his whip and riding straight at the girls.

"Why, Maryanka has quite forgotten you," said Ustenka, nudging Maryanka with her elbow and breaking into a shrill laugh.

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"Why, Maryanka has quite forgotten you," said Ustenka, nudging Maryanka with her elbow and breaking into a shrill laugh.

Maryanka moved away from the horse and, throwing back her head, calmly looked at the Cossack with her large sparkling eyes.

"True enough, you have not been seen for a long time! Why are you trampling us under your horse?" she remarked drily, and turned away.

Lukashka had appeared particularly merry. His face had been shining with audacity and joy. Obviously staggered by Maryanka's cold reply, he suddenly knitted his brows.

"Step up on my stirrup and I'll carry you away to the mountains, lass!" he suddenly exclaimed, as if to disperse his dark thoughts, and caracoled among the girls. Stooping down towards Maryanka, he whispered, "I'll kiss you, oh, how I'll kiss you! . . ."

Maryanka's eyes met his, and she suddenly blushed and stepped back.

"Oh, bother you! you'll crush my feet," she said, and bending her head looked at her well-shaped feet in their tightly-fitting light-blue stockings with clocks, and her new red slippers trimmed with narrow silver braid.

Lukashka turned towards Ustenka, and Maryanka sat down next to a woman with a baby in her arms. The baby stretched its plump little arms towards the girl, and seized the string of coins that hung down on to her blue *beshmet*. Maryanka bent towards the child and glanced at Lukashka from the corner of her eye. Lukashka was pulling out from under his coat, out of the pocket of his black *beshmet*, a bundle of sweetmeats and seeds.

"There, I give them to all of you," he said, handing the bundle to Ustenka and smiling at Maryanka.

A confused expression again appeared on the girl's face. It was as though a mist gathered over her beautiful eyes. She drew her kerchief down from her lips, and leaning her head over the fair-skinned face of the baby

that still held her by her coin necklace, she suddenly began to kiss it greedily. The baby pushed its little hands against the girl's high breasts, and opening its toothless mouth, screamed loudly.

"You're smothering the boy!" said the little one's mother, taking him away; and she unfastened her *beshmet* to give him the breast. "You'd better go and welcome the lad."

"I'll just go and put up my horse, and then Nazarka and I will come back; we'll make merry all night," said Lukashka, touching his horse with his whip and riding away from the girls. Turning into a side-street, he and Nazarka rode up to two houses that stood side by side.

"Here we are, all right, old fellow! Be quick and come soon!" called Lukashka to his comrade, dismounting in front of one of the houses; then he carefully led his horse in at the gate of his own home.

"Hullo, Stepka?" he said to his dumb sister, who, smartly dressed like the others, came in from the street to take his horse; and he made signs to her to take the horse to the hay but not to unsaddle it.

The dumb girl made her usual humming noise, smacked her lips as she pointed to the horse, and kissed it on the nose. That meant that she loved it and it was a fine horse.

"How d'you do, mother? How is it that you have not gone out yet?" shouted Lukashka, holding his gun in place as he mounted the steps of the porch.

His old mother opened the door. "Dear me! I never expected, never thought you'd come," said the old woman. "Why, Kirka said you'd not be here."

"Go and bring some *chikhir*, Mother. Nazarka is coming here and we will celebrate the feast day."

"Directly, Lukashka, directly!" answered the old

woman. "Our women are making merry. I expect our dumb one has gone too."

She took her keys and hurriedly went to the outhouse.

Nazarka, after putting up his horse and taking the gun off his shoulder, returned to Lukashka's house and went in.

CHAPTER XXXVII

"Your health!" said Lukashka, taking from his mo'her's hands a cup filled to the brim with *chikhir* and carefully raising it to his bowed head.

"This is bad!" said Nazarka. "You heard what Uncle Burlak said, 'Have you stolen many horses?' He seems to know!"

"He's an old wizard!" Lukashka replied shortly. "But what of that!" he added, tossing his head. "They are across the river by now. Go and find them."

"Still, it's a bad look-out."

"What's a bad look-out? Go and take some *chikhir* to him tomorrow, and nothing will come of it. Now let's make merry. Drink!" Lukashka shouted, just in the tone old Yeroshka uttered the word. "We'll go out into the street and make merry with the girls. You go and get some honey; or no, I'll send our dumb girl. We'll make merry till morning."

Nazarka was smiling. "Are we stopping here long?" he asked.

"Till we've had a bit of fun. Run and get some vodka. Here's the money."

Nazarka ran off obediently to get the vodka from Yamka's.

Like birds of prey, Uncle Yeroshka and Yergushov, scenting where the merry-making was going on, tumbled into the house one after the other, both tipsy.

"Bring us another half-pail," shouted Lukashka to his mother, by way of reply to their greeting.

"Now then, tell us, where did you steal them, you devil?" shouted Yeroshka. "You're a fine fellow, I'm fond of you!"

"Fond indeed..." answered Lukashka, laughing, "carrying sweets from cadets to lasses! Eh, you old...."

"That's not true, not true!... Oh, Marka!" And the old man burst out laughing. "And how that devil begged me. 'Go and arrange it for me,' he said. He offered me a gun! But no. I'd have managed it, but I feel for you. Now tell us, where have you been?" And the old man began speaking in Tartar.

Lukashka answered him promptly.

Yergushov, who did not know much Tartar, only occasionally put in a word in Russian:

"What I say is, he's driven away the horses. I know it for a fact," he chimed in.

"Girei and I went together." (His speaking of Girei Khan as "Girei" was, to the Cossack mind, evidence of his boldness.) "Just beyond the river he kept bragging that he knew the whole of the steppe, and would lead the way straight, but we rode on and the night was dark and my Girei lost his way and began wandering in a circle without getting anywhere: couldn't find the village, and that was that. We must have gone too much to the right. We wandered about well-nigh till midnight. Then, thank goodness, we heard dogs howling."

"Fools!" boomed Uncle Yeroshka. "We used to lose our way in the steppe, too. Who doesn't? But I used to ride up a hillock and start howling like a lone wolf, like this!" He placed his hands to his mouth and howled like a whole pack of wolves, all on one note. "The dogs would answer at once.... Well, go on—so you found them?"

"We soon led them away! Nazarka was nearly caught by some Nogai women."

"Did they?" Nazarka, who had just come back, said in an injured tone.

"We rode off again, and again Girei lost his way, and almost landed us among the sand dunes. We thought we were just getting to the Terek, but we were riding away from it all the time!"

"You should have steered by the stars," said Uncle Yeroshka.

"That's what I say," interjected Yergushov.

"Yes, steer when all is black; I tried and tried all about ... and at last I put the bridle on one of the mares, and let my own horse go free—thinking he'll lead us out; and what do you think! he just gave a snort or two with his nose to the ground, galloped ahead, and led us straight to our village. And it was lucky he did, for it was getting quite light. We barely had time to hide them in the forest. Nagim came across the river and took them away."

Yergushov shook his head. "Just what I said, very clever. Did you get much for them?"

"It's all here," said Lukashka, slapping his pocket.

Just then his mother came into the room, and Lukashka did not finish what he was saying.

"Drink!" he shouted.

"Yes, Girchik and I, rode out late one night..." Yeroshka began.

"Oh, bother, we'll never hear the end of you!" said Lukashka. "I'm going." And having emptied his cup and tightened his belt, he went out.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

It was already dark when Lukashka went out into the street. The autumn night was fresh and calm. A full golden moon was climbing behind the tall dark poplars that grew on one side of the square. From the chimneys of the outhouses smoke rose and spread above the village, mingling with the mist. Here and there lights shone

through the windows, and the air was laden with the smell of *kizyak*, grape-pulp, and mist. The sounds of voices, laughter, songs, and the cracking of seeds mingled just as they had done in the day-time, but were now more distinct. Clusters of white kerchiefs and caps gleamed through the darkness round the houses.

In the square, before the shop door, which was lighted and open, the black and white figures of Cossack men and girls showed through the darkness, and one heard from afar their loud songs and laughter and talk. The girls, hand in hand, went round and round in a circle, stepping lightly in the dusty square. A thin girl, the plainest of them all, set the tune:

From beyond the wood, from the forest dark,
From the garden green, and the shady park,
There came, there came two young fellows gay.
They were brave and smart, bach'lors both were they!
And they walked and walked, then stood still, each man.
So they stood and soon to dispute began!
Then a maid came out; as she came along,
"Soon to one of you," said she, "I'll belong!"
'Twas the fair-faced lad got the maiden fair,
Yes, the fair-faced lad with the golden hair!
Her right hand so white in his own took he,
And he led her round, for his mates to see!
And he said, "Have any of you, in all your life,
Met a lass as fair as my little wife?"

The old women stood round, listening to the songs. The little boys and girls ran about chasing one another in the dark. The men stood by, catching at the girls as the latter moved round, and sometimes breaking the ring and entering it. On the dark side of the doorway stood Beletsky and Olenin in their Circassian coats and sheep-

skin caps, and in a style of speech unlike that of the Cossacks talked together in low but distinct tones, conscious that they were attracting attention.

Hand in hand, in the ring, moved plump little Ustenka in her red *beshmet* and the stately Maryanka in a new *beshmet* and smock. Olenin and Beletsky were discussing how to snatch Ustenka and Maryanka out of the ring. Beletsky thought that Olenin wished only to amuse himself, while Olenin was expecting his fate to be decided. He wanted, at any cost, to see Maryanka alone that very day, and to tell her everything, and ask her whether she could and would be his wife. Although that question had long been answered in the negative, he hoped he would be able to tell her all he felt, and that she would understand him.

"Why did you not tell me sooner?" said Beletsky. "I would have got Ustenka to arrange it for you. You are such a queer fellow! . . ."

"What's to be done! . . . Some day, very soon, I'll tell you all about it. Only now, for Heaven's sake, arrange for her to come to Ustenka's."

"All right, that's easily done! Well, Maryanka, will you belong to the 'fair-faced lad,' and not to Lukashka?" said Beletsky, speaking to Maryanka first for propriety's sake, but, receiving no reply, he went up to Ustenka and begged her to bring Maryanka home with her. He had hardly time to finish what he was saying before the leader began another song, and the girls started pulling each other round in the ring. They sang:

Past the garden, the garden,
A young lad came strolling down,
Up the street and through the town;
And the first time, as he passed,
He did wave his strong right hand.
And the second time he passed,

He waved his hat with silken band.
And the third time, as he passed,
He stood still, did not depart.
He this time did not depart, but he made himself look smart.
"I have wished to come to thee
Just to have a little talk.
Why is it that thou, my dear,
In the park don't come to walk?
Come now, answer me, my dear,
Dost thou hold me in contempt?
Later on, thou knowest, dear,
Thou'lt remember and repent.
Soon to woo thee, I will come,
And when we shall married be,
Thou shalt weep because of me!"
Though I knew what to reply,
Yet I dared not him deny,
No, I dared not him deny!
In the park to walk went I,
In the park my lad to meet,
There my dear one I did greet.
As I bowed, so it befell,
To the ground my kerchief fell.
Up he picked it, where it lay.
"In thy white hand take it, pray.
Please accept it, dear, from me,
Say I am beloved by thee,
I don't know at all, I fear,
What I am to give thee, dear!
To my dear I think I will
Of a shawl a present make—
Kisses five for it I'll take."

Lukashka and Nazarka broke into the ring and started walking about among girls. Lukashka joined in the sing-

ing, taking seconds in his clear voice as he walked in the middle of the ring swinging his arms.

"Well, come in, one of you!" he said. The other girls pushed Maryanka, but she would not enter the ring. The sound of shrill laughter, slaps, kisses, and whispers, mingled with the singing. As he passed Olenin, Lukashka gave a friendly nod.

"Dmitry Andreich! You come to have a look?" he said.

"Yes," answered Olenin drily.

Beletsky stooped and whispered something into Ustenka's ear. She had no time to reply till she came round again, when she said, "All right, we'll come."

"And Maryanka too?"

Olenin stooped towards Maryanka. "You'll come? Please do, if only for a minute. I must speak to you."

"If the other girls come, I will."

"Will you answer my question?" he said, bending towards her. "You are gay now."

She moved away from him. He followed her. "Will you?"

"What question?"

"The one I asked you the other day," said Olenin, stooping to her ear. "Will you marry me?"

Maryanka thought for a moment. "I'll tell you," she said, "I'll tell you tonight." And through the darkness her eyes gleamed brightly and kindly at the young man.

He still followed her. It was a joy to him to be close to her.

But Lukashka, without ceasing to sing, suddenly seized her firmly by the hand and pulled her from her place in the ring of girls into the middle. Olenin had only time to say, "Come to Ustenka's," and stepped back to his companion. The song came to an end. Lukashka wiped his lips, Maryanka did the same, and they kissed.

"No, no, kisses five!" said Lukashka. The rhythm of song and dance gave way to chatter, laughter, and run-

ning about. Lukashka, who seemed to have drunk a great deal, began to distribute sweetmeats to the girls. "They are for everyone!" he said, with proud, comically pathetic self-admiration. "But anyone who goes after soldiers, get out of the ring!" he suddenly added with an angry glance at Olenin.

The girls snatched his sweetmeats from him and, laughing, struggled for them among themselves. Beletsky and Olenin stepped aside.

Lukashka, as if ashamed of his generosity, took off his cap and, wiping his forehead with his sleeve, came up to Maryanka and Ustenka. "Answer me, my dear, dost thou hold me in contempt?" he said in the words of the song they had just been singing, and turning to Maryanka, he angrily repeated the words: "Dost thou hold me in contempt? When we shall married be, thou shalt weep because of me!" he added, embracing Ustenka and Maryanka both together. Ustenka tore herself away, and swinging her arm gave him such a blow on the back that she hurt her hand.

"Well, are you going to have another turn?" he asked.

"The other girls may if they like," answered Ustenka, "but I am going home, and Maryanka was coming too."

With his arm still round her, Lukashka led Maryanka away from the crowd to the darker corner of a house.

"Don't go, Maryanka," he said, "let's have some fun for the last time. Go home and I will come to you!"

"What am I to do at home? Holidays are meant for merry-making. I am going to Ustenka's," replied Maryanka.

"I'll marry you, all the same, you know!"

"All right," said Maryanka, "we shall see when the time comes."

"So you are going," said Lukashka sternly, and pressing her close, he kissed her on the cheek.

"Here, leave off! Stop bothering me." And Maryanka, wrenching herself from his arms, moved away.

"Ah, my girl, it will turn out badly," said Lukashka reproachfully, and stood still shaking his head. "Thou shalt weep because of me. . . ." And turning away from her, he shouted to the other girls: "Now then! Let's have another song!"

What he had said seemed to have frightened and vexed Maryanka. She stopped. "What will turn out badly?"

"That!"

"What will?"

"That you keep company with a soldier-lodger and no longer care for me!"

"I'll care just as long as I choose. You're not my father, nor my mother. What do you want of me? I'll care for whom I like!"

"Well, all right. . ." said Lukashka, "but remember!" He moved towards the shop. "Girls!" he shouted, "why have you stopped? Go on dancing. Nazarka, fetch some more *chikhir*."

"Well, will they come?" asked Olenin, addressing Beletsky.

"They'll come directly," replied Beletsky. "Come along, we must prepare the ball."

CHAPTER XXXIX

It was already late in the night when Olenin came out of Beletsky's hut, following Maryanka and Ustenka. He saw in the dark street before him the gleam of the girl's white kerchief. The golden moon was sinking towards the steppe. A silvery mist hung over the village. All was still; there were no lights anywhere, and one heard only the retreating footsteps of the young women. Olenin's heart beat fast. The damp night air cooled his burning face. He glanced up at the sky, then turned to

look at the house he had just left; the candle was already out. Then he again peered through the darkness at the girls' retreating shadows. The white kerchief disappeared in the mist. He was afraid to remain alone, he was so happy. He jumped down from the porch and ran after the girls.

"Bother you, someone may see..." said Ustenka.

"Never mind!"

Olenin ran up to Maryanka and embraced her. Maryanka did not resist.

"Haven't you kissed enough yet?" said Ustenka. "Marry and then kiss, but now you'd better wait."

"Good night, Maryanka, tomorrow I will come to see your father, and tell him. Don't you say anything."

"Why should I!" answered Maryanka.

Both the girls started running. Olenin went on by himself, thinking over all that had happened. He had spent the whole evening alone with her in a corner by the stove. Ustenka had not left the hut for a single moment, but had romped about with the other girls and with Beletsky all the time. Olenin had talked in whispers to Maryanka.

"Will you marry me?" he had asked.

"You'll deceive me and not have me," she replied cheerfully and calmly.

"But do you love me? Tell me for God's sake!"

"Why shouldn't I love you! You don't squint," answered Maryanka, laughing, and her hard hands squeezed his. "What white, white, soft hands you've got—they're like cream," she said.

"I am in earnest. Tell me, will you marry me?"

"Why not, if Father gives me to you?"

"Well then, remember, I shall go mad if you deceive me. Tomorrow I will tell your mother and father. I shall come and propose."

Maryanka suddenly burst out laughing.

"What's the matter?"

"It seems so funny!"

"It's true! I will buy a vineyard and a house, and will enrol myself as a Cossack."

"Mind you don't go after other women, then. I am severe about that."

Olenin joyfully repeated all these words to himself. The memory of them now gave him pain, and now such joy that it took away his breath. The pain was because she had remained as calm as usual while talking to him. She did not seem at all excited by these new conditions. It was as if she did not trust him, and did not think of the future. It seemed to him that she only loved him for the present moment, and that in her mind there was no future with him. He was happy because her words sounded to him true, and she had consented to be his.

"Yes," he thought to himself, "we shall only understand one another when she is quite mine. For such love, there are no words. It needs life—the whole of life. Tomorrow everything will be cleared up. I cannot live like this any longer; tomorrow I will tell everything to her father, to Beletsky, and to the whole village."

Lukashka, after two sleepless nights, had drunk so much at the fête that for the first time in his life his feet would not carry him, and he slept in Yamka's house.

CHAPTER XL

The next day Olenin awoke earlier than usual and immediately remembered what lay before him, and he joyfully recalled her kisses, the pressure of her rough hands, and her words, "What white hands you have!"

He jumped up and wished to go at once to his hosts' hut to ask for their consent to his marriage with Maryanka. The sun had not yet risen, but there seemed to be an unusual bustle in the street: people were moving about

on foot and on horseback, and talking. He threw on his Circassian coat and hastened out into the porch. His hosts were not yet up. Five Cossacks were riding past and talking loudly together. In front rode Lukashka, on his broad-backed Kabarda horse. The Cossacks were all speaking and shouting together and it was impossible to make out exactly what they were saying.

"Ride to the upper post," shouted one.

"Saddle, and catch us up, be quick," said another.

"It's nearer through the other gate!"

"What are you talking about!" cried Lukashka. "We must go through the middle gate, of course."

"Yes, it's nearer that way," said one of the Cossacks, who was covered with dust and rode a perspiring horse.

Lukashka's face was red and swollen after the drinking of the previous night, and his cap was pushed to the back of his head. He spoke with authority, as though he were an officer.

"What is the matter? Where are you going?" asked Olenin, with difficulty attracting the Cossacks' attention.

"We are off to catch *abreks*. They're hiding among the dunes. We are just off, but there are not enough of us yet." And the Cossacks continued to shout, more and more of them joining as they rode down the street. It occurred to Olenin that it would not look well for him to stay behind; besides he thought he could soon come back. He dressed, loaded his gun, jumped on to his horse, which Vanyusha had saddled more or less well, and overtook the Cossacks at the village gates. The Cossacks had dismounted, and filling a wooden bowl with *chikhir* from a little cask which they had brought with them, they passed the bowl round to one another, and drank to the success of their expedition. Among them was a foppish young cornet, who happened to be in the village, and who took command of the group of nine Cossacks. All these Cossacks were privates, and although the cornet

assumed the airs of a commanding officer, they only obeyed Lukashka.

Of Olenin they took no notice at all, and when they had all mounted and started off, and Olenin rode up to the cornet and began asking him what was taking place, the cornet, who was usually quite friendly, treated him with marked condescension. It was with great difficulty that Olenin managed to find out from him what was happening. Scouts, who had been sent out to search for *abreks*, had come upon several hillsmen some six miles from the village. These *abreks* had taken shelter in a pit and had opened fire on the scouts, declaring they would not surrender. The corporal, who had been scouting with two Cossacks, had remained to watch the *abreks* and had sent one Cossack back to get help.

The sun was just rising. Three versts beyond the village the steppe spread out on all sides and nothing was visible except the arid, monotonous plain covered with the foot-marks of cattle, and here and there with tufts of withered grass, with low reeds in the flats, and rare, little-trodden foot-paths, and the camps of the nomad Nogai tribe showing faintly on the horizon. The absence of shade and the austere aspect of the place were striking. The sun always rises and sets red in the steppe. When it is windy great hills of sand are carried from place to place. When it is calm, as it was that morning, the silence, uninterrupted by any movement or sound, is peculiarly striking. That morning in the steppe it was quiet and dull, though the sun had already risen; there was a peculiar feeling of emptiness and softness in the air. Nothing stirred; the footfalls and the snorting of the horses were the only sounds to be heard, and even they quickly died away. The men rode almost silently. A Cossack always carries his weapons so that they neither jingle nor rattle. Jingling weapons are a terrible dis-

grace to a Cossack. Two other Cossacks from the village caught the party up and exchanged a few words. Lukashka's horse either stumbled or caught its foot in some grass, and became restive—which is a sign of bad luck among the Cossacks, and at such a time was of special importance. The others looked round, then turned away, trying not to notice what had happened. Lukashka pulled at the reins, frowned sternly, set his teeth, and flourished his whip above his head. His good Kabarda horse, prancing from one foot to another, not knowing with which to start, looked as if it were about to take wing and fly. But Lukashka struck its sleek flanks with his whip once, then again, and a third time, and the horse, showing its teeth and spreading out its tail, snorted and reared on its hind legs a few paces away from the others. "Ah, a good steed that!" said the cornet. That he said "steed," instead of "horse," indicated special praise.

"A lion of a horse," assented one of the others, an old Cossack.

The Cossacks rode silently forward, now at a foot-pace, then at a trot, and these changes were the only incidents that for a moment interrupted the stillness and solemnity of their movements.

Riding through the steppe for about eight versts, they passed nothing but one Nogai tent, placed on a cart and moving slowly along at a distance of about a verst from them. A Nogai family was moving from one part of the steppe to another. Afterwards they met two tattered Nogai women with high cheek-bones, who with baskets on their backs were gathering dung left by the cattle that wandered over the steppe. The cornet, who did not know their language well, tried to question them, but they did not understand him and, obviously frightened, looked at one another with anxiety.

Lukashka rode up to them both, stopped his horse and promptly uttered the usual greeting. The Nogai women

were evidently relieved, and began speaking to him quite freely as to a brother.

"*Ai-ai, kop abrek*!" they said plaintively, pointing in the direction in which the Cossacks were going. Olenin understood that they were saying, "Many *abreks*."

Never having seen an engagement of this kind, and having formed an idea of them only from Uncle Yeroshka's tales, Olenin wished not to be left behind by the Cossacks, but wanted to see it all. He glanced admiringly at the Cossacks, and watched and listened alertly to make his own observations. Though he had brought his sword and a loaded gun with him, when he noticed that the Cossacks avoided him he decided to take no part in the action, as in his opinion his courage had already been sufficiently proved when he was with his detachment, and also because he was very happy. Suddenly a shot was heard in the distance. The cornet became excited, and began giving orders to the Cossacks as to how they should divide and from which side they should approach. But the Cossacks did not appear to pay any attention to these orders, listening only to what Lukashka said and looking at him alone. Lukashka's face and figure were composed and solemn. He put his horse to a trot with which the others were unable to keep pace, and screwing up his eyes, he kept looking ahead.

"There's a man on horseback," he said, reining in his horse and keeping in line with the others.

Olenin looked intently, but could not see anything.

The Cossacks soon distinguished two riders, and quietly rode straight towards them.

"Are those the *abreks*?" asked Olenin.

The Cossacks did not answer his question, which appeared quite meaningless to them. The *abreks* would have been fools to venture across the river on horseback.

"That must be friend Rodka waving to us," said

Lukashka, pointing to the two mounted men, who were now clearly visible. "Look, he's coming this way."

A few minutes later it became plain that the two horsemen were the Cossack scouts. The corporal rode up to Lukashka.

CHAPTER XLI

"Are they far away?" was all Lukashka said.

Just then they heard a sharp shot, some thirty paces off. The corporal smiled slightly.

"That's our Gurka taking a pot at them," he said, nodding in the direction of the shot.

Having gone a few paces farther, they saw Gurka sitting behind a sand hillock and loading his gun. To while away the time, he was exchanging shots with the *abreks*, who were behind another sand dune. A bullet whistled from that direction. The cornet was pale and grew confused. Lukashka dismounted, threw the reins to one of the other Cossacks, and went up to Gurka. Olenin also dismounted, and bending down, followed Lukashka. They had hardly reached Gurka when two bullets whistled above them. Lukashka looked around at Olenin laughing, and stooped a little. "Look out, or they'll kill you, Dmitry Andreich," he said. "You'd better go away—this is no place for you."

But Olenin was determined to see the *abreks*. From behind the mound he saw caps and muskets some two hundred paces off. Suddenly there was a puff of smoke and again a bullet whistled past. The *abreks* were hiding in a marsh at the foot of a hill. All Olenin's attention was focussed on the place where they had taken up their position. In reality it was very much like the rest of the steppe, but because the *abreks* were there, it seemed to detach itself from all the rest and to have a special character of its own. Indeed it appeared to Olenin that

it was just the spot for *abreks* to occupy. Lukashka went back to his horse, and Olenin followed him.

"We must get a hay cart," said Lukashka, "or they'll kill us all. Over there, behind that mound, there's a Nogai cart with a load of hay." The cornet listened to him, and the corporal agreed. The cart of hay was fetched, and the Cossacks, taking cover behind it, pushed it forward. Olenin rode up a hillock from where he could see everything. The hay cart moved forward, and the Cossacks crowded together behind it. The Cossacks advanced, but the Chechens—there were nine of them—sat in a line with their knees together and did not fire.

All was quiet. Suddenly from the Chechens arose the sound of a mournful song, something like Uncle Yeroshka's "Ai dai, dalalai." The Chechens knew that they could not escape, and to prevent themselves from being tempted to take to flight, they had strapped themselves together knee to knee and with their guns at the ready were singing their death song.

The Cossacks behind their hay cart drew closer and closer, and Olenin expected the firing to begin any moment, but the silence was only broken by the *abreks'* mournful song. Suddenly the song ceased; there was a sharp report, a bullet struck the front of the cart, and Chechen curses and yells broke the silence, and shot followed on shot, and one bullet after another struck the cart. The Cossacks did not fire, and were now only five paces distant.

Another moment passed, and the Cossacks with a whoop rushed out on both sides of the cart—Lukashka was in front. Olenin heard only a few shots, then shouting and moans. He thought he saw smoke and blood. Abandoning his horse and scarcely aware of what he was doing, he ran towards the Cossacks. Horror seemed to blind him. He could not make out anything, but understood that all was over. Lukashka, pale as linen, was

holding a wounded Chechen by his arms and shouting, "Don't kill him. I'll take him alive!" The Chechen was the red-haired man who had fetched his brother's body away after Lukashka had killed him. Lukashka was binding his arms. Suddenly the Chechen wrenched himself free and fired his revolver. Lukashka fell, and blood began to flow from his stomach. He jumped up, but fell again, swearing in Russian and in Tartar. More and more blood appeared on his clothes and under him. Some Cossacks ran up to him and began loosening his belt. One of them, Nazarka, before beginning to help, fumbled for some time, unable to put his sword in its sheath: it would not go the right way. The blade of the sword was blood-stained.

The Chechens, with their red hair and clipped moustaches, had been shot and hacked to pieces. Only the one who had fired at Lukashka, though wounded in many places, was still alive. Like a wounded hawk, smeared with blood (blood was flowing from a wound under his right eye), pale and gloomy, he looked about him with wild eyes and clenched teeth, as he crouched, dagger in hand, still prepared to defend himself. The cornet went up to him as if intending to pass by and with a quick movement shot him in the ear. The Chechen started up, but it was too late, and he fell.

The Cossacks, breathing heavily, pulled the bodies about, collecting weapons. Each of these red-haired Chechens had been a man, and each one had his own individual expression. Lukashka was carried to the cart. He continued to swear in Russian and in Tartar.

"No, you don't, I'll strangle him with my hands. *Ana seni*!" he cried, struggling. But he soon became too weak to shout.

Olenin rode home. In the evening he was told that Lukashka was dying, but that a Tartar from over the river had undertaken to cure him with herbs.

The bodies were brought to the village office. Women and little boys crowded round to look at them.

It was growing dark when Olenin returned, and he could not collect himself after what he had seen. But towards night memories of the evening before came rushing to his mind. He looked out of the window. Maryanka was passing to and fro, from the house to the cowshed, putting things straight. Her mother had gone to the vineyard and her father to the office. Olenin could not wait till she had finished her work, but went out to meet her. She was in the hut, standing with her back towards him. Olenin thought she must be shy.

"Maryanka," he said. "Maryanka! May I come in?"

She suddenly turned. There was a scarcely perceptible trace of tears in her eyes, and her face was beautiful in its sadness. She looked at him in silent dignity.

Olenin again said: "Maryanka, I have come——"

"Leave me alone!" she said. He face did not change, but the tears ran down her cheeks.

"What are you crying for? What is it?"

"What is it?" she repeated in a rough voice. "Our Cossacks have been killed, that's what."

"Lukashka?" said Olenin.

"Go away! What do you want?"

"Maryanka!" said Olenin, approaching her.

"You will never get anything from me!"

"Maryanka, don't speak like that," Olenin entreated.

"Get away. I'm sick of you!" shouted the girl, stamping her foot, and moved threateningly towards him. And her face expressed such abhorrence, such contempt, and such anger, that Olenin suddenly understood that there was no hope for him, and that his first impression of this woman's inaccessibility had been perfectly correct.

Olenin said nothing more, but ran out of the hut.

CHAPTER XLII

For two hours after returning home he lay on his bed without stirring. Then he went to his company commander and obtained leave to join the staff. Without saying good-bye to anyone, and sending Vanyusha to settle his accounts with his landlord, he prepared to leave for the fort where his regiment was stationed. Uncle Yeroshka was the only one to see him off. They had a drink, and then a second, and then yet another. Again, as on the night of his departure from Moscow, a three-horsed post-chaise stood waiting at the door. But Olenin did not confer with himself as he had done then, and did not say to himself that all he had thought and done here was "not it." He did not promise himself a new life. He loved Maryanka more than ever, and knew that he could never be loved by her.

"Well, good-bye, my lad!" said Uncle Yeroshka. "When you go on an expedition, be wise, and listen to my words—the words of an old man. When you are out on a raid, or the like (you know I'm an old wolf and have seen things), and when they begin firing, don't get into a crowd, where there are many men. When you fellows get frightened, you always try to get close together with a lot of others. The more the merrier, you think, but that's where it is worst of all! They always aim at a crowd. Now I used to keep farther away from the others, and went alone, and I've never been wounded. Yet what things haven't I seen in my day?"

"But you've got a bullet in your back," remarked Vanyusha, who was clearing up the room.

"That was the Cossacks fooling about," answered Yeroshka.

"Cossacks? How was that?" asked Olenin.

"Oh, just so. We were drinking. Vanka Sitkin, one of

(The old man laughed.) "The women brought our priest. They were getting ready to bury me. They said, 'He defiled himself with worldly unbelievers; he made merry with women; he killed people; he did not fast, and he played the balalaika. Confess your sins,' they said. So I began to confess. 'I've sinned!' I said. Whatever the priest said, I always answered 'I have sinned.' He began to ask me about the balalaika. 'Where is the accursed thing?' he says. 'Show it me and smash it.' 'But I haven't got it any more,' I said. I'd hidden it myself in a net in the outhouse. I knew they would never find it. So they left me. But I got over it all the same. And then I had a go at my balalaika—— Well, what was I saying?" he continued. "Listen to me, and keep farther away from the other men, or you'll get yourself killed for nothing. I feel for you, that's the truth. You are a drinker—I love you! And fellows like you like riding up the mounds. There was one who lived here, who had come from Russia, he always would ride up the mounds—he used to call them, 'hillocks,' or some such queer name. Whenever he saw a mound, up he went. Once he galloped off that way and rode to the top, so pleased with himself, but a Chechen fired at him, and killed him! Ah, how well they shoot from their gun-rests, those Chechens! Some of them can shoot better than I can. I don't like it when a fellow gets killed for nothing like that. Sometimes I used to look at your soldiers and wonder at them. There's foolishness for you! On they go, the poor fellows, all in a clump, and even sew red collars to their coats. How can they help being hit! One gets killed, they drag him away, and another takes his place! What foolishness!" the old man repeated, shaking his head. "Why not scatter and go one by one? So you just go like that, and they won't hit you. That's what you must do!"

"Well, thank you! Good-bye, Uncle. God willing, we may meet again," said Olenin, getting up and moving

towards the passage. The old man, who was sitting on the floor, did not rise.

"Is that the way you say 'good-bye'? Fool, fool!" he began. "Oh dear, what has come to people! We've kept company, kept company for well-nigh a year, and now 'good-bye!' and off he goes! Why, I love you, and how I pity you! You are so forlorn, always alone, always alone. Nobody seems to love you. At times I can't sleep for thinking of you. I am so sorry for you. As the song has it:

It is very hard, dear brother,
In a foreign land to live.

So it is with you."

"Well, good-bye," said Olenin again.

The old man rose and held out his hand. Olenin pressed it and turned to go.

"Give us your mug!" And the old man took Olenin by the head with both hands and kissed him three times with wet moustaches and lips, and began to cry.

"I love you, good-bye!"

Olenin got into the post-chaise.

"Well, is that how you're going? You might give me something to remember you by. Give me a gun! What do you want two for?" said the old man, sobbing quite sincerely.

Olenin got out a musket and gave it to him.

"What a lot you've given the old fellow," murmured Vanyusha. "He's never satisfied! A real old beggar. They are all such irregular people," he remarked, as he wrapped himself in his overcoat and took his seat on the box.

"Hold your tongue, swine!" exclaimed the old man, laughing. "What a stingy fellow!"

Maryanka came out of the cowshed, glanced indifferently at the post-chaise, bowed and went towards the hut.

"*La fille*!" said Vanyusha, with a wink, and burst out into a silly laugh.

"Get moving!" Olenin shouted angrily.

"Good-bye, my lad! Good-bye. I won't forget you!" shouted Yeroshka.

Olenin glanced back. Uncle Yeroshka was talking to Maryanka, evidently about his own affairs, and neither the old man nor the girl looked at Olenin.